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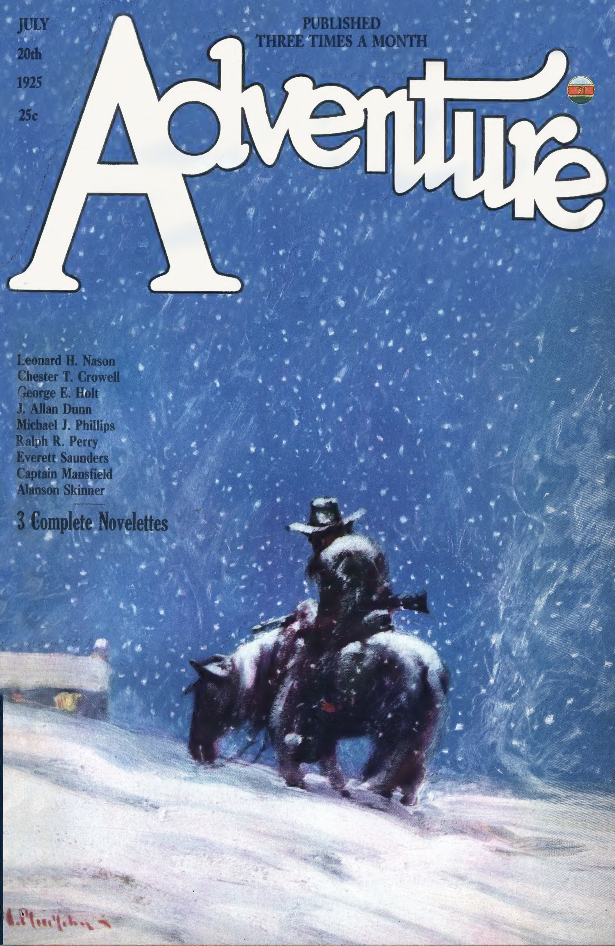
Adventure



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3 Complete Novelettes

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* * *

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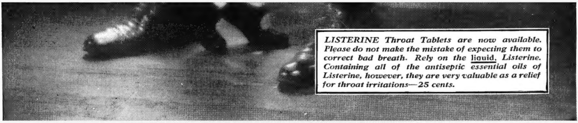

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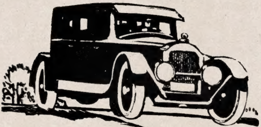
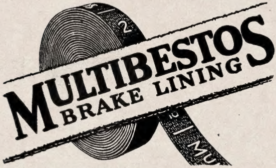


Every time you pull the emergency brake, think of



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ADVENTURE
July 20th, 1925

Published three times a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $6.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 53
Number 5

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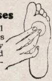

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Adventure

JULY 20 1925

Vol LIII No 5

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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WHEN *Slim Evans* found a telegram from *Malcolm Cary* in his letter-box he took a little airplane trip to Hastings to give the gushers the once-over. The gushers were the same as ever, but his old-time enemies were not. "WELLS, WELLS, WELLS!" is a complete novelette of the oil fields, by Thomson Burtis, in the next issue.

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Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one

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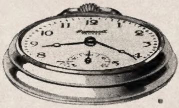

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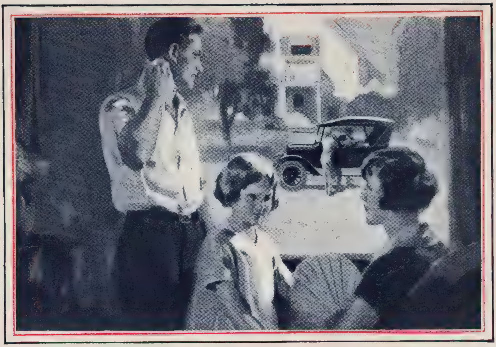

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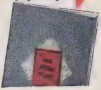

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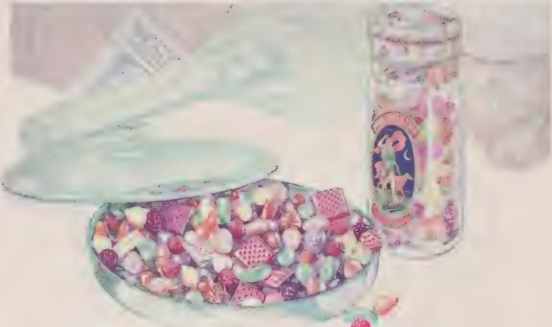

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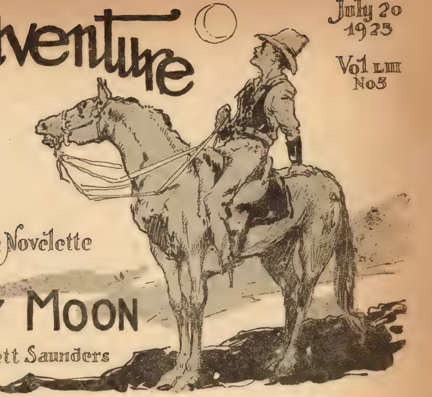

A Complete Novelette

LUCKY MOON

by Everett Saunders

Author of "The Way of a Horse and a Man," "News from God's Country."

I

WHEN the sun was about a hand's span above the Seven Devils in the west, Blake Moody and Hank Fairless rode down to Tom McAlister's Skull Creek ranch. Their horses, Blake's blaze-faced, stocking-legged bay and Hank's gray, were lean and hard from the weeks on a trail that stretched with many devious turnings from New Mexico to Idaho. Hank was returning to his old "stomping ground." Blake, who had never before ridden so far north, had come over the mountains like the classical bear to see what he could see.

There was mild activity at the ranch. A band of loose horses, palpably unbroken ones, were bunched at the far side of a corral. There were saddle horses with trailing reins and a few men by the corral gate.

"So that's the kind of mustang you breed in Idaho?" Blake observed. It was significant that in his swift glance over the scene, which had taken in horses, men and the plan of buildings and corrals, the fact that the horses were young Percherons should have impressed him. Always he instinctively appraised animals from general and individual characteristics to marks and brands.

"I suppose them colts is Israel Brown's," Hank said. "Yes, there he is talkin' to Tom McAlister. He owns the I-S outfit on Squaw Crick. Wonder what the ol' duffer's doin' with his colts up here.

"Before I left here he had brung in some mares an' a stallion or two. He said he was tired of seein' ten dollar fuzz-tails eat up all the bunch grass. If a man is goin' to raise horses, Is says, he might as well raise horses. He's a purty long-headed, ol' Israel. Let him look at a bunch uh steers with the latest quotations in his head an' he'll tell you in three cents uh what they're worth."

"And yet," said Blake, "if some sticky-fingered *hombre* was to run 'em off the range, it's a safe bet he'd pick a bullet-headed, snake-eyed cross between bob wire and wildcat to ride after 'em. And the fuzz-tail would cover four miles of trail to their two."

Hank manipulated a latch with a boot toe

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and kicked open a swinging gate. He was greeted loudly as they approached the group by the corral.

"Well, if it ain't Hank Fairless back again!" exclaimed a youth in bespangled chaps. "Must have found some tough country in your travels to come back here. What'd you see that was new, anyhow?"

"Well," said Fairless slowly, "right in the middle uh December, when the snow should uh been neck deep to a tall Indian, I seen the ground so hot the sand swifts was stoppin' ever' three yards to spit on their feet. An' I seen——"

"That'll do, Hank." McAlister, the owner, came forward. "That's about all we can stand to oncet. Sorry they wasn't able to change you some fer the better down there. But I'm right glad to see you, anyhow."

It was as though Fairless had been gone only seven days. He knew them all: Rob White, the youth who had first spoken; Israel Brown of the IS ranch, middle aged, red faced, with an air of solid prosperity that was not misleading—he owned much land and many cattle.

There was Dick Young, handsome, lean faced and self-assured, who had inherited a comfortable fortune in land and not a few cattle wearing the Bar Y brand. His manner indicated that he had clean forgotten that another man than himself had accumulated the wealth. He rode a black leather saddle heavy with silver mounting on a proud dappled gray horse. His spade bit was of massive silver as were the conchas on his chaps.

There were Harry Satory and Carl Modell, McAlister's year-round men, who were top cow hands.

Brown, on a deal with Young for some young Shorthorn bulls, had been looking over the Bar Y cattle which were ranged south of Skull Creek. There he had unexpectedly run across a band of his Percherons. They had corraled the horses at the Skull Creek ranch, and McAlister had agreed to send them back to their range next day. Rob White had been riding for Young.

"This man with me, fellers," said Hank by way of introduction, "calls himself Blake Moody. He's a cowpuncher, an' when I say cowpuncher, I mean just that. He's Texas, Arizony an' New Mexico breed. You notice he rides a double-rig saddle with a hard twist rope tied fast—which last I don't care to imitate, not on this rough range.

"If you've got any doubts about this *hombre* bein' a puncher, just bring out any limber-backed, head-fightin', man-eatin', buckin', strikin', kickin', can't-be-rode mustang you got an' watch Blake top him off. Things like them in there," he contemptuously indicated the young pure-breds in the corral, "just strap a big piece uh plate glass flat on their backs an' stand him up on it with a pair uh skates."

"Ye-a!" Brown roused in defense of his stock. "That's all you horse-killers think about. 'Whoop-pe! Ride 'em an' scratch 'em both ways from the cinch!' Them colts ain't saddle horses, if I've got to tell you. Inside a year they'll fetch me two hundred apiece."

"That is," Hank interposed, "if they don't fetch somebody else a hundred an' fifty in the meantime."

"Which proves I ain't the only one they look good to. As I was tellin' Tom jest now, it's danged funny to me the way they ramble around. Six days ago they was on their Squaw Crick range. Today I find 'em up towards the head uh Skull Crick. If ever I ketch anybody chasin' them colts around, an' I happen to be packin' a gun, that feller's goin' to think he's been teasin' a nest of bald hornets!"

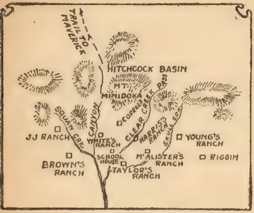
"WELL, anyhow," said Hank, "it's a sagebrush cinch I ain't as much of a horse-killer as I might be. Ol' Deuteronomy ain't dead yet, an' he's just finished a trip from close to the Border. Besides, we chased cows off an' on up the line an' run mustangs awhile in Nevada."

"When Hank talks for me," said Blake with serious mien, "it ain't any sign he's got my permission. Knowing him, you won't expect me to live up to any reputation he might give me. I did ride for a one-horse outfit for a couple weeks once and sort of liked the work. Now I'm looking for a job. Hank said maybe there'd be one here."

McAlister assured them there would be shortly. The Fall roundup was to begin in a few days. Meanwhile they could stick round and start a few broncs or something till the work began.

At the supper table the irrepressible Hank went on talking.

"Since me an' this sidekick uh mine may be around here for some time, it's only fair for you to be warned about him so you can pertect yourselves. He's square, but he's afflicted with misbecomin' convictions about new moons. When Blake gits his lamps on the new moon across his right shoulder he swears that for the next thirty days he can't be outrun, throwed down or bucked off. On a bronc he scratches with both feet, an' his low hands in poker is full houses an' four of a kind.



"You may think I'm kiddin' you, but I ain't." Hank had his knife, loaded to the hilt, poised halfway between his plate and his mouth. "It was called to my notice one evenin' just after we had crossed the Nevada line. The sun had went down an' the sky was dusky. Our general direction was north, mind you. If the trail hadn't bent south around the point of a ridge, we'd uh been ruined, because just then Blake happened to look across his right shoulder an' seen the new moon over by Californy.

"I shiver yet to think what'd happened if ol' Nib's nose had been pointed north. After that we always et when we was hungry, if we had any place to mooch or buy grub or any jack——"

"Try the sword-swallowing act with that knife, Hank," Blake interrupted with utter lack of appreciation of the monologue. "The cargo of grub on it is getting cold."

"I've noticed," he went on to the others, "that the only times anybody would mistake Hank for anything but an escaped inmate of a 'sane assylum is when he's got his mouth crammed so full of grub or the neck of a whisky bottle he can't make a sound."

"Yes, go on an' finish your supper, Hank," said Satory. "We 'preciate the warnin', but I figger we can take a chance with a run of luck thirty days long. I don't believe there is any such animal."

"You'll see," Hank said. "I ain't kiddin' you, that's a sagebrush cinch."

"I reckon there's nobody but what knows there's something in luck," said Blake. "I ain't superstitious, though you might think so if you didn't know Hank and the freedom he takes with the truth. But I've got this to say: The most glaring example of luck on earth is this same Hank Fairless. If I talked as much as he does, all the new moons in the sky—and there may be a pile of 'em off among the stars from what I hear—couldn't keep me from getting stitched from my Adam's apple to my belt inside six days."

"Ain't that the truth!" said Modell. "When he left here for the south that time, I'd have bet my new chaps ag'in the hole in a doughnut he'd never survive his first meetin' with a gang of strangers."

Hank had made a jest of something in which Blake was more than three-fourths serious. According to his own statement, he wasn't in the least superstitious. He didn't believe in ghosts that prowled around dragging clanking chains; but he did have a feeling that could hardly be called a belief, a feeling rooted deeper than reason, judgment or any conscious thought-process, that when he got his first glimpse of the new moon over his right shoulder, then for the next twenty-eight days all things were essentially right for Blake Moody.

To his own undoing he had once in an unguarded moment mentioned this to Hank.

Three months back, when the remuda had been turned loose at the Diamond outfit in New Mexico and he and Hank confronted by the necessity of seeking other employment, he had let a flipped coin decide for him whether he should go to Idaho with Hank or accept a flattering offer from a man high in the employ of a big cattle outfit operating in South America to go to Argentina. Hank didn't want any South America in his. The old U. S. A. was plenty good enough for him. Blake spun the coin, heads north, tails south, and heads came up.

II

THE cook shack at Skull Creek ranch was set on the north side of a driveway. The bunkhouse was directly opposite it on the south. A beaten path lay between the two buildings. The boys finished the meal and filed along the path by ones and twos.

The sun had just set. There had been a magnificent play of color in the sky, crossing the zenith and spraying clouds with crimson down to the very horizon in the east. Now it was darkling, the brilliance going out swiftly.

Blake, who had not looked into an almanac in months, who never made an effort to remember the dates of the moon's changes, was looking into the gorgeous west. Out of the sky, as if conjured by magic, where it had swum concealed by light, appeared the moon in its first quarter, juvenescent, riding downward on the heels of the sun. It was a thin curved sliver of veritable silver above the silhouette of the saw-toothed Seven Devils.

Oblivious to his surroundings, uplifted by the beauty of the sky, Blake looked across the quarter million miles of space and read a promise of good luck in the omen. He was jerked rudely back to reality.

"What'd I tell you!" Hank yelled triumphantly. "Ol' Blake's goin' true to form. You'll find out I wasn't kiddin' you before you're a week older.

"But you'll have to pull luck for both of us, Blake. Just after I come out the door I was weavin' around watchin' that dad blamed bull bat swoop hither an' yon an' cut his monkey shines up there, an' I seen the moon straight down my left shoulder."

They assembled in the bunkhouse. Hank threw himself, groaning luxuriously upon a bunk.

"I only hope the comin' hard luck don't hit me soon enough to keep me from tearin' off forty or fifty good winks tonight. I'm sure weary."

"There's all kinds of chances for you to cash in on this moon, Blake." Satory laughed as he rummaged among the tobacco cans on a shelf for a deck of cards. "The annual rodeo is bein' pulled off at Maverick before long. They's big prizes offered for the bronc ridin', bulldoggin', ropin' an' bull ridin' contests, a swell silver-mounted saddle an' lots of good hard coin. If it's a fact you go in for forkin' mean broncs, an' luck is with you, it might pay you to ride over there.

"But I don't suppose Hank was doin' nothin' but run off at the face. For my part I never could see as it payed to go up ag'in the perfessional riders that foller the rodeos, the fixed judges an' so forth. The local boys has sure got to do the fancy cowboyin' to stand a chance for the money."

"Say!" Hank roared, rolling out of the bunk. "I've took about enough disrespect from you imitation cow hands. Runnin' off at the face! I never told a thing in my life that a preacher wouldn't back up with his hand on a stack uh Bibles a mile high.

"But I've bragged on that unappreciatin' Blake Moody for the last time. I'll never say nothin' in his favor ag'in if I live six hundred years, except this: he's the niftiest little rider that ever clumb over a saddlin' chute to git aboard a locoed bronc. An' if you don't believe it, just wait till I've earn't a little money to gamble with an' I'll take all your wages away from you."

"Don't go back to bed yet," Satory said. "It's a long time till mornin'. Pull up that chair an' I'll shoot you a little game of seven-up."

"Be sociable and make it penny ante," Rob White suggested. He was a handsome youth who affected a manner of studied nonchalance. He was wide between the eyes, and his mouth and jaws suggested the possibility of hardening into strength of character.

"Gimme them cards!" Hank scooped them up and began shuffling. "Draw or stud? I vote for stud an' hereby deal the first hand," he said without waiting for an answer.

"I like stud. It's fast. I can lose my few pennies quicker an' git back to my much-needed rest."

"Yes, you must get a good long rest tonight," Rob drawled. "You'll want to go to Jim Taylor's barn dance tomorrow night. We know how you love to dance."

"Ye-a!" Hank snarled. "Love to dance! The last time I tried to dance I got myself blame nigh laid up for a week. Them other dancers wasn't satisfied just to step on my toes. They even walked on my knees."

The game had been going on for half an hour when McAlister with Brown and Young came in. McAlister outlined the next day's work. Blake and Hank were to ride to the Clear Creek shed and bring over some horses for the cavvy. Satory and Modell were to help White put Brown's horses back on their Squaw Creek range.

Brown and Young were ready to start home, but Israel's eyes were caught by the movement of cards and chips. Poker was his one weakness. The bent of mind that so drew him to the game, turned in another direction had been one of the factors in his success. In his business he had always been willing to take a long chance, expand his holdings on a shoestring, in the face of desperate odds bluff with nothing in the hole. His wisdom had been sufficient to prevent over-indulgence in literal poker games.

"IF THIS ain't too steep, I'd like to git in fer a few minutes," he said. "Want to let my supper di-gest a little before I start, anyhow."

"Purty steep, Is," Hank told him. "The whites are one cent. The reds are one cent. The blues are one red cent per each. Can you stand it?"

"I'll try it a whirl. Hate to take a chance on cripplin' myself, though. A man ortent to resk losin' more'n he can afford to."

He pulled out a long leather sack, emptied a handful of coins on the table and bought a stack with a quarter. Young followed suit.

The character of the game changed swiftly. The original players immediately felt the weight of money. They had tacitly accepted a low limit in the betting; but Young began backing his cards more heavily. Hank allowed himself to be bluffed out of a pot. He pushed back his chair.

"Can't play ag'inst money with chickenfeed. I'll just let Blake hold up my end."

Blake kept his chair. He and Israel Brown, allowing for the difference thirty years of living always make, had characteristics in common. Once in a game, be the stakes high or low, his urge was to go all the way through. As the betting stiffened, his concentration intensified. He ceased bandying jokes. He tilted his hat forward until the brim shaded his eyes. His money low, in the beginning he played with extreme caution, waiting for high cards on the first turns. Time after time, refusing to ante, he pushed his first two cards to the center of the table.

Rob White, playing like the callow youth he was, quickly ran his money out in driblets while the betting between Young and Brown went higher and higher.

The deal had come to Rob. He turned all his pockets inside out elaborately, laid tobacco, cigaret papers, matches, pocket knife and handkerchief before him. Then he set his last few counters and small coins in the center and began shuffling.

"This is my last one," he explained unnecessarily, "unless I drew something higher'n a pair of deuces. Anyhow, I don't see the good in playing 'em all against my belly." His reference was palpably to Blake. "Might as well get it over with, if I can't have any luck. Looks like the new moon Hank was telling us about is taking a vacation."

Blake raised a pair of disconcerting eyes.

"You heard Hank talking. When you hear me talk about luck you'll be told that pure luck is two-thirds brains. Some people just naturally can't have any luck."

"If you was awful careful to spend all your time in good company, Rob," Hank put in, "you might develop enough brains to recognize a good poker player when you see one."

"I'll stay out of your company then, all I can," the youth retaliated, half angry.

He was not succeeding in dealing himself anything worth while; but a pair of sevens back to back had fallen to Blake, and he was moving in. He continued to stay, paying heavily for the privilege. When the last card was turned, all his money was in the pot. He had two pairs, eights and sevens, in sight and a third seven in the hole. Brown had three kings and Young two large pairs. Each had had Blake beaten up to the last turn, and each had backed his hand.

"Ah!" Hank breathed, as Blake drew in the fat pot. "Now we're startin' to go!"

With a wider margin to play in, Blake loosened up. The pile of bills and coins before him grew steadily.

"Did you say this friend o' your'n was a cow hand or a tinhorn?" Brown asked of Hank as he fished a check book from an inside pocket. The few minutes he had allowed himself in the beginning were now long past. He had wholly forgotten such things as di-gesting suppers. He was thralled by the game, losing money, half angry and enjoying himself.

"I said cowpuncher," Hank exulted. "You're now gittin' the experience uh playin' poker with an amachure what's in luck. Did somebody try to kid me about the new moon a while ago or no? Huh?"

"Luck! Blatherashun. Have you got a new deck o' cards around here? These have got grease spots an' finger prints all over 'em."

Blake's head came up with a snap.

"The boys was playing with these pasteboards," he drawled. "I was invited in the game. Without going into details, I'd say you've got as good a chance to read these marks as I have. You put on as many as I did."

"I didn't mean that," Brown growled. "But look at the dog ears on that ace o' hearts."

"I seen it. You noticed I didn't bet it the two times I had it buried."

Satory had dragged a suit case from under a bunk. From a tangle consisting of a loud and wrinkled silk shirt, a blue silk muffler, and a pair of cotton drawers, he brought out a new deck with the seal unbroken. He thumped it down upon the table.

"You can have real service in Carly Monto, gents," he told them.

The new deck made no change in Blake's spectacular drawing. All that counted on that evening were the numbers of hearts, clubs, spades or diamonds printed on the faces of the cards. At the end of three hours Brown and Young had each drawn several sizable checks.

Blake had won the price of several good young Percherons and Shorthorn bulls, the equivalent of the earnings of many months at fifty dollars.

III

THE sun had not yet risen from behind the shoulder of Mt. Minidoka when Blake and Hank swung into their saddles. They helped Satory, Modell and White start Brown's Percheron colts northward along the road to the I-S; then they turned toward the mountain, crossed the low divide between Skull and Clear Creeks and took a steep, rutty, dim and crooked road up the creek bottom.

The thorn and service-berry bushes were full of ripe fruit in purple clusters. Where the cañon broke from the higher hills lay a small down-at-heel ranch.

There was a jumble of dilapidated log shacks, small barns, sheds, and chicken coops with leaky roofs and wide cracks, unchinked, between the logs. There were corrals with staggering fences and a hundred acres of gently sloping, alluvial delta that was cultivated after a haphazard fashion. Except for a thin thread of smoke from the chimney, the place seemed deserted.

"Who tends bar up here?" asked Blake.

"Tom Harris. Ol' Tom's a bum housekeeper. He's a bum rancher, too, as you may notice; but it used to be a sight to see him jackknife his old carkiss in a chair, hook his chin on a fiddle an' scrape out 'Buffalo Gals,' meanwhile poundin' the floor with his right heel. He's a artist with a fiddle or at callin' a quadrille.

"Israel Brown says if Tom'd took half as much interest tendin' to his business as he done scrapin' a fiddle, he would uh been a millionaire. Like as not he's right. A man gits good at the thing he likes. But it's sure tough for the old feller to live way up here all alone by himself, with only a two-gallon jug uh snake-bite remedy he generally keeps for company. If we wasn't so conscientious about earnin' our wages, we'd go in an' chew the fat with him awhile.

"Come to think of it, I bel'eve it's our duty."

They rode down to the log cabin. There was a crumbling stick-and-mud chimney in the rear and a lean-to shed on one side. Harris himself met them at the door.

To use his own phrase, Harris had growed most of his growin' endways. He was six feet one inch tall and very narrow. His vest swung open over a flannel shirt that had several buttons missing. His overalls hung in folds. He had to "git his pants a mite too big around to git the right len'th."

His leathery face wrinkled into a grin at sight of Hank.

"Didn't never expect to see you ag'in," he said.

"How're you, Tom, anyhow!" Hank cried, wringing his hand. "How's ever' little thing? Suppose you're goin' to take in Taylor's barn dance tonight?"

"I aimed to," said Harris sadly, "but my hosses clumb out through the fence day afore yistidy, an' the cussed rheumatics has got my laigs jimmed up so I can't scarcely walk. Can't go after 'em handy. I'd shore like to, but I reckon I won't be able to git down thar."

"You're talkin' like an old man," Hank reproved. "Never heard you cussin' rheumatics before, an' I never knowed you to miss a dance in forty miles."

"I am an old man," said Tom. "I ain't good fer nothin' no more. Rheumatics has been comin' on me gradual fer years. Here lately they're gittin' the best of me. A danged dentist that pulled a tooth fer me five year ago said my teeth was the cause of it. He wanted to pull 'em all an' make a set of false ones. After my money!

"First chance I git, I'm goin' to sell out the ranch an' move down to Riggin. I want a little seegar store to keep up expenses an' give me a chance to take it easy.

"Come in an' set down. You might as well chaw the rag with me awhile."

They entered the cabin. Bags hung from smoky rafters. Unwashed tin dishes and pound tobacco tins littered the table. Dust was deep on the floor, and one glimpse of the grimy stove would have sent a woman into hysterical tears. The only cared-for articles in sight were two well-oiled rifles resting across the prongs of a set of five-point antlers nailed to the wall.

"Find cheers," Tom told them, lowering himself with solicitude for stiff joints into the nearest.

"Nope. I ain't good fer nothin' no more," he repeated. "Can't ranch to do any good. A cow seldom brings me in more'n one calf a year. Better let me sell out to you. Young fellers like you could shore make things hum. I've got a good layout here."

"Fat chance uh me buyin' a ranch," Hank laughed. "I didn't have much more'n enough to buy a pair uh wrasslin' trunks for a grasshopper when I hit the Skull Crick ranch last night. I played poker with Is Brown an' Dick Young for a few minutes, an' now it'd plumb break me to pay the first instalment on a free lunch."

"I didn't much expect you to be flush enough to buy a ranch, even if they were givin' 'em away," Tom said. "But if you run acrost anybody in the market fer one, you can boost the sale fer me. I'm offerin' good terms. Won't take much money to swing the deal. Is Brown has got a plaster on it, not very big. If somebody'll pay off that mortgage an' show me he means to try, he can pay off the rest as he makes it."

"All right, I'll buy it, if nothin' else'll do you. I'll give a note with my horse an saddle for s'curity.

"An' I might be able to pay spot cash with a little help from Blake. I forgot to tell you, Tom, that I'm ridin' with a ranny to who money ain't no object. It would uh done your ol' rheumatic heart good to see him cleanin' Is Brown an' Dick Young in that stud game last night. Fastest game you ever seen, in a bunk house, too. Blake stays on the right side uh the moon—or the moon stay, on his right side, I forgit which. He was earnin' money at the rate of half million or so a year for two or three hours."

"Wouldn't be no wiser thing that you could do, if you did make a cleanin' at cards, than to sink it into a good ranch," Harris told Blake with the manner of wise age to youth. "If you don't salt it down, it'll run right out through a hole in your pocket an' you'll never know where it went to."

"I know it," said Blake. "I'm figgering on setting up all night and put sheet iron patches on all of my pockets, so this jack won't spill till I get to Argentina next winter. They told Hank it'd be summer there then, but he didn't believe it. And they tell me a few thousand of American money there will buy a ranch half as big as Idaho."

"Some ranch!" said Tom.

"But that ain't what's worryin' me," Hank interposed. "I've been settin' here all this time waitin' for you to insult me by offerin' me a drink. But you ain't said a word."

"I hain't been to the city fer so long the ol' jug's about empty. There may be a few swallers left in it."

"That's enough, if they're good big swallers," said Hank.

Tom hauled a stone jug from under the bunk and handed it to Blake, who tilted it to his lips with, "Here's how," to his host.

"Aw, Blake," Hank protested. "You just plain waste it. You take just enough to wet your neck, never enough to git down to where it'll do some good. You're like a feller with a reservoir for irrigation, lettin' out the water in driblets that wets the ditch but never runs out on the field. Purty soon the reservoir is empty an' still the grass ain't growin'— Dog-gone!" he broke off. "I'm glad you didn't take much. There ain't much in here."

But he gurgled five times before offering the jug to Tom, who shook his head.

"Kill it," he invited. "You will before you git away, anyhow."

Hank did so, gratefully, then set it down.

"Tom," he said, "now I know durn well you're really gittin' old. When a man gits so careless as to let his stock uh snake-bite remedy run down to nothin', he's bound to come to grief. Once I seen a Basco sheepherder that's been bit by a rattler. The camp tender was packin' him out. He was all swole up. Big sore where the fangs had struck. Blood poisonin' developin'. Turrible. I'd uh been all broke up if it'd been a human bein' instid of a sheepherder."

"I wouldn't have no trouble keepin' medicine fer myself," Tom said. "But I've got too many friends that come by in need of perventative treatments."

"I hate to see you miss that dance," Hank worried. "I mean I hate to see that dance miss you. Did you say your horses had got away?"

"Yes. Bunch of range stuff come pawin' around the fence. They got to fightin' back an' forth an' knocked off some rails. My plugs follered the wild ones off. They're right up thar in the cañon a piece. But I ain't got nothin' to chase 'em on."

"We'll git 'em for you," Hank stated, rising to his feet. "A barn dance wouldn't be nothin' without ol' Tom Harris to call quadrilles. Besides, Blake, Tom wants us to leave. He's been as good as blamin' us for lappin' up the last of his likker."

"I knowed you'd go as soon as the jug was empty," said Tom. "That's why I didn't offer you a drink no sooner."

ABOVE the ranch they climbed out of the cañon. They rode along the elevation scanning each hollow and tributary gulch for signs of the horses. At last they located them.

The wild horses broke away as the riders approached. Hank pointed out the two belonging to Harris. After a sharp run Blake got his rope on the slower of the two, a string-halted old roan mare. The other was able to keep up with the band; and Hank, galloping recklessly, swinging his lariet, got a nasty fall when his horse stepped into a badger hole.

Blake led his poor prize to where Hank was picking himself up, swearing softly and feeling for broken bones. His face was a mask of blood and dust where he had barked it as he slid upon the ground.

"One horse is all Tom can ride at once," Hank said. "I didn't want the other'n, anyhow.

"That's what a man always gits when he tries to help the other feller," he complained, daubing at his face with a blue bandanna. "I'm goin' to quit it. After this, Hank Fairless is the *hombre* I'm goin' to look out for. What'd I care whether Tom gits to Taylor's dance or not? I can't dance. Here I've went to all this trouble for a gang that like as not won't appreciate it."

"That was sure a dirty fall," Blake said sympathetically. "But if you feel like riding at all we'd better not kill any more time. We're not going to get any cayuses to Skull Creek if we don't pound 'em on the tail."

"It's that new moon workin' already," Hank said. "I wasn't su'prized when my horse went down. You see it down your right shoulder, an' almost break ol' Is Brown. I look at it down my left, an' almost break my own neck the first time I ride out of a trot."

They led the horse back to Harris' place. The old man invited them to stay for dinner. Since it was nearly noon and a long time since breakfast, they accepted. They helped him cook, and took it upon themselves to sweep the floor and wash the dishes.

It was late afternoon by the time they had collected several scattered bunches of horses and had driven them into the Clear Creek corrals.

"We'll just leave 'em here tonight," said Hank. "No time now to git 'em to Skull Crick. We'll go straight down to Taylor's. If we stay up all night at the dance, it won't be necessary to strain our will power gittin' out of the blankets early in the mornin'."

"McAlister won't gather much of an opinion of our speed," Blake said. "Here we've killed the whole day riding a few miles and driving some ponies into a corral."

"Leave it to me, I won't have to lie much. One look at my map an' Tom'll know we must uh been busy at something."

"Yes. Busy stopping a band saw with your face. I don't care much about that dance, anyhow," Blake demurred. "These clothes ain't fit to go to a party in."

"Clothes!" Hank exclaimed. "Don't you know that the Constitution uh the United States pervides that any cowpuncher goin' to a dance wearin' anything but his boots with a pair uh good ol' Levi Strauses stuffed into 'em is to be took out an' hung to a cottonwood? Or if they ain't any cottonwood handy, to a wagon-tongue propped up on a neck-yolk? Ain't you learn't that yet?"

"No. I didn't get a good education like you did, Hank. But we can't drive these horses in the dark, so we might as well go. I wouldn't mind looking on for awhile."

IV

FROM the number of wagons and buckboards parked on the roomy barn lot, from the horses of all shapes, colors, and sizes under harness and saddle hitched all about, it appeared that the whole countryside had turned out for Jim Taylor's barn dance. A glance at the interior of the big log barn was confirmation of the impression.

The barn was fragrant with hay. Lanterns swung over a brightly lighted space where they danced, and shadows leaped and swayed against the dusky recesses, mysterious areas of gloom outside the range of light.

When Blake and Hank entered, the crowd was already warmed up. An organ had been brought in. A girl with a dwarfish, malformed body and a pair of beautiful and uncannily intelligent eyes in an ill-favored face was at the instrument. Hank labeled her as Jane Compton.

"Her folks lives up toward Riggin. Nice folks. She's been sick most of her life. She's spent several years in the East, Newbrasky, Ioway, or some place, with relations. She's smart as a whip, but stuck-up, an' she don't care a whoop how hard she shoots it into a feller. I wouldn't live in the same house with her a week for nineteen million pesos, bad as I need money.

"But, say, if you want to see a classy dame, take a look at Rob White's sister, Betty. There she is comin' out on the floor with Dick Young now. Don't she look like seven hundred dollars? She's a great friend uh Jane's, though I don't reck'lect she ever was far from this neck uh the woods. She thinks she's purty dog-gone wise, too."

Blake located the individuals indicated by Hank. But when his eyes found Betty White he quested no further. The girl was the embodiment of his dream of fair woman.

At that moment the thin frame of Tom Harris was most prominent. He was calling for two more couples to complete the set.

"Two more couples!" he shouted. "Need jest two more!" An uncourtly young man led out a bashful girl. "Jest one more! Come on, children!" He ran to the wall and seized upon the middle aged Jim Taylor and his wife.

"Been ten year since I tried to dance," Taylor protested as Tom dragged them out, disregarding protests, and thrust them into place.

"Now!" he said, balancing himself on one leg.

"All to your places
An' straighten up your faces,
Hook up your traces
An' go hog wild. Ever'body dance!"

From the organ came the quick-beating, harum-scarum strains of "The Irish Washer-Woman."

First lady out,
Lady on the right;
Swing the guy that's got the cash,
Now the one with the black mustache,
Now the one that wears fine clothes,
Now the one with the big plug nose.
Meet your pardner,
Make a little bow,
Turn right back
An' you're all right now.

The two sets swung into the impetuous rhythm of the dance, tapping time with feet, swinging in their turns. Blake contrasted Betty White with the other women. She was merry but restrained, animated but graceful. She made a classic of the rude quadrille.

First gent out;
Swing the gal with the purty hair,
Now the one that puts on airs,
Now the one that dresses so neat,
Now the one with the great big feet.
Swing waist swing!
Up the road an' down the lane,
Right an' left through
An' the center couple swing.
Move, children, move!

Faster and faster whirled the dancers. Old Tom, palpably free of rheumatic pains, was a dynamo of enthusiastic energy, clapping his hands, stamping out the beat of the music, darting in to straighten out confused couples, bawling:

"Swing your pard like swingin' on the gate,
Swing your honey an' don't be late.
Home you go an' turn 'em all around.
Heep a-hookin' on."

Hank's eyes shone.

"Ain't he a humdinger! I claim ol' Tom is sure a artist when it comes to callin' a square dance. I'm sure glad you got a string on that ol' roan before I got my spill.

"Wonder if Jim forgot to lay in a little kag uh wet lunch."

But Blake was not concerned with wet lunches, nor though he had had no supper, with the fat steer that was roasting in a pit and filling the air with appetizing odors. Now he really regretted the poor clothes he wore, but his solicitude was largely uncalled for. With the exception of Dick Young, who was really well-dressed, none of the men more than faintly approached conventional attire. Young alone deserved the death sentence according to Hank's constitutional provisions. The punchers wore new and crinkly overalls, high heeled boots, with bright handkerchiefs around their necks.

Blake's attention was all for one model of artistry. He had resolved not to dance. Now he resolved to break that resolve. As the dancers were leaving the floor, he turned upon his friend.

"Say, Hank, do you love me?"

"It's a sagebrush cinch I do, cowboy. You're the only sweetheart I got. An' I never trifle on you, though you're dad blamed mean to me at times."

"Then prove it by giving me an intruduction to that girl. I look like a tramp, but there's a lot more rigged out just as bad."

"If I know anything about you, that's just what you are. I'll do it, ol' hoss, but the lord knows you'd have a better send-off if somebody more pop'lar with the ladies interduced you. Tell you what, I'll git Rob to do it."

AND he did. Rob, with the air of somnolent disdain introduced Blake to his sister as a cattleman from New Mexico.

"I met him at McAlister's last night, Betty. He acted like he was thinkin' of taking over the I-S outfit or the Bar Y. I don't know much about him, but I guess he's as fit to dance with as me or Dick Young."

The melting strains of a waltz floated from the organ and they glided out upon the floor. She raised her eyes to his.

"I believe Rob said you are a cattle man. You look awfully young to be managing a lot of money. Are you really thinking of locating here?"

"Yes," he said. "For the last five minutes I've been thinking strong about it." Then, at her puzzled expression, he laughed. "When Rob said I am a cattleman, he must have meant that I am of the stuff that some cattlemen are made of. I'm a cowpuncher. A puncher that owns some cattle might be rated as a stockman. So as soon as I get a ranch and some cattle I'll be one. If Rob is truthful, that must be what he meant."

"Rob isn't always strictly truthful," she smiled.

They talked as they danced. Some of their utterances bore sense, some were commonplace, many were banalities. But Blake was enraptured, and to the best of his judgment the music of the waltz was only ten seconds from start to finish.

He asked for the next waltz and it was granted him.

The hours, sped by the music and laughter, ran away. Blake had a wonderful time. At intervals he danced with Betty White. He danced with no one else. Between those infrequent waltzes he stood in an obscure place near the wall and watched her.

His sensations were not untroubled joy. Dick Young, suave and well-dressed, a notable figure in the crowd, danced with Betty two times to Blake's one. Blake would have indignantly denied being touched with incipient jealousy.

Nevertheless he wondered acutely why the girl should smile with such evident pleasure into the young rancher's eyes. He racked his brain to imagine the sparkling wit that must be flowing from Young's tongue. Altogether, the owner of the Bar Y injected enough of the spice of uncertainty into the occasion to keep Blake keyed to the highest pitch.

But he had a good time until he began to note that Hank was drinking heavily from some unknown source and was well on the way to bring further disgrace upon himself.

Blake wondered at his own sensitiveness to Hank's extravagances and noisy appreciation of trivial things. He had often seen Hank drinking, but it had been in more fitting circumstances. Hank's proclivity on this occasion seemed a monstrous incongruity.

He had not heard that there was any broached keg. He investigated the source of supply and found that Rob White had a flask, or rather a supply of flasks. Rob and Hank principally were attending to the consumption.

The effect upon the two was not the same. Hank uttered idiocies and laughed with imbecile joy about nothing. He weaved as he walked and stared owlishly about. Rob grew morose and sullen and walked very straight and deliberately. He was a dangerous type of drinker.

Hank never came much farther than the door. He stayed there among a group of stags and laughed and laughed.

Rob ceased dancing for a time; then he began again. He met curious eyes with dignified belligerency and uttered pompous periods with tangled grammar and sadly mixed metaphors.

Between the two they quickly spoiled the dance for Blake. The first effect came indirectly through Betty. She followed her brother with worried eyes. All the laughter went out of her.

Blake was dancing with Betty. Rob was also on the floor. Blake's attempts at conversation fell flat. At last he gave up trying to talk and followed the direction of her gaze.

At that moment two couples, in one of which was Rob, collided. Rob's unstable balance was lost and he fell, dragging his partner down.

Hank in his position near the door roared out his mirth, his voice soaring far above all other sounds in the room. He tilted back his head, he rocked on his heels, lost his balance and staggered. He bent double and slapped his knees.

Rob rose from the floor. Couples around him were smiling, some laughing outright. Blake saw the boy's face grow suddenly white and murderous. He made no effort to assist his partner. He started swiftly toward the group at the door.

"Oh!" Betty gasped.

Blake sensed what was coming and ran after him. Rob went straight toward Hank. At the last moment his right hand brushed back the skirt of his coat and came up with a gun. He raised it over his head, the blue steel glinting, and started to strike. Hank under the swift metamorphosis of drunkenness was transformed by the threat from a laughing imbecile to a demon. But it is unlikely he would have escaped a stunning blow had Blake not reached his assailant.

As the gun came up Blake seized it. He twisted it from Rob's hand, thrust him sprawling to one side, tossed the gun through the door and met Hank's bellowing rush.

"Lemme at 'im!" Hank roared. "Uggggg!" his voice suddenly ceased in a strangling gurgle as Blake ducked under his flailing arms and grasped his shirt collar from behind. He jerked Hank off his balance and dragged him out the door and twenty yards from the building before releasing him.

"Whatchu think!" Hank began, then paused as he sensed Blake's cold ferocity.

That was the end of the dance for Blake. He had his hands full with Hank. Fairless alternately stormed and wept. Blake dragged him from the vicinity of the barn, found a straw stack and dumped him bodily upon it. When Hank had grown quiet, Blake rustled a horse blanket and threw it over him.

Lying near the sleeper, he heard the faint music and laughter going on and on. He grew drowsy at last. He didn't know when the dance broke up.

He was awakened shortly after daybreak by Taylor doing the chores. Leaving Hank asleep he followed the rancher into the barn.

"Well," said Taylor, "I reckon you young folks had a good time. Hope so. But I'm gittin' too old really to enjoy a dance. I pay the next day for losin' a night's sleep. Didn't use to mind it."

"I was going fine," Blake said, "till them fools Hank and Rob, went and spoiled it all."

Taylor laughed indulgently.

"Hank is hair-brained, but he don't mean bad. I don't know about Rob, though. I've been noticin' his gun play here lately. If that boy don't git a-holt of hisself, he's liable to wake up some fine morning in serious trouble. I'd hate to see it, on account of his folks. There ain't no finer people than the Whites."

Hank appeared not long after. He was carrying the horse blanket on his arm. He had straw in his hair, a bleary look in his eyes and cuts and abrasions on his face from his fall of the previous day. He was a sorry spectacle.

"I want to use all the cold water in your spring, Jim," he said, combing at his tousled hair with his fingers. "Some party, wasn't it? From what little I remember, we all sure had a fine time. I did. Ever'body did. But how the dickens I ever mistook that straw stack for a roomin' house is what I can't figger!"

V

AFTER breakfast at Taylor's the two rode up Clear Creek to finish their previous day's work. The corrals were a series of log inclosures at the confluence of two gulches. They were flanked by two lines of fence converging at the gate. The corrals were used by stockmen in common for cutting out and branding cattle and for corraling wild horses.

As they came abreast of the corrals they saw two other riders working among the horses.

"Look who's here!" said Hank. "My ol' friends Jeff an' Pete, sure as shootin'. Heavy on the word friend. If I'd knowed they wanted their mustangs rounded up, by grab, I'd uh worked till midnight cuttin' out all the J-J stuff an' pushin' 'em clean to the top uh Minidoka. Dad blame me if I wouldn't. Think uh me roundin' up cayuses free uh charge for Jeff Jamison!"

"Who are they?"

"Jeff an' Pete Jamison. J-A-M-I-S-O-N, Jamison. Me an' Jeff an' Pete likes each other just like buck deers an' rattlesnakes is in love. You just watch me! One uh these days Jeff is goin' to git me riled just right an' we'll go together like a cranky buck sheep an' a winder pane. An' it's a sagebrush cinch yours truly won't be the winder pane. He's wise. He don't give me scarcely no chance to call him."

What was the origin and cause of the mutual antipathy Hank did not reveal. Blake learned afterward that the Jamisons owned a section of land a few miles above Brown's holdings on Squaw Creek. Hence they were ranchers of sorts. They had a brand registered for both horses and cattle, but owned not many of either.

Ranching was not their sole and settled occupation. They preferred money that was made in more diverting ways than mere labor. They were first class judges of stock and were dangerous opponents in a horse trade. Just now they were picking from their horses some of the most vicious to take to Maverick to the Fall rodeo on the chance of selling them for buckers. Soft from the Summer on the range, the animals needed a few week's diet of hay and oats to condition them.

"Are they still any Quarter Circle S stuff in there?" Hank asked in business-like tone as he reached the corral gate.

"Yes," said Jeff Jamison briefly. He was a saturnine individual whose lanky frame suggested strength.

"They's some J-J horses, too," added Pete. "That line-back buckskin mare is one of 'em. She's goin' to Maverick. When you see the name Sally Patica headlined in the papers you won't be readin' about the Queen uh the Gypsies or no patent medicine neither. It'll be referrin' to that mare. She can *wampoo*. If you doubt it, we'll stick your hull on her an' you can crawl on an' see for yourself—that is, if you have any time for lookin' after she starts."

"Huh!" said Hank cynically. "I noticed her yesterday. Had a notion to ride 'er bareback to Taylor's dance. Wouldn't waste time monkeyin' with a imitation like her. If I wanted to see her buck, I'd just put my understudy here on her, an' let him claw her awhile."

"I'm tellin' you she ain't nothin' for boys an' understudies to practice on. Take's a he-man; an' no he-man better be tryin' to ride her to a dance bareback. When a understudy gits on, he'll crave all the leather in the State to pull."

"Oh, he ain't so bad," said Hank. In fact he can ride most anything that wears hair. I brung him up from New Mexico with me to put the finishin' touches to his eddication."

"Well," Pete put on his best horse trading manner, "I've seen good punchers that come from places all the way from Texas to Montana. I've seen horses that was raised in Oregon that was snaky buckers. This mare was raised right here. She's a Idaho bucker; an' I'm willin' to bet the fifty bucks I got from Dick Young for a saddle horse—a durned good one too—the other day that there ain't a man in the crowd can ride 'er straight up an' scratch 'er."

"I wouldn't risk any money bettin' *you* could do it." With difficulty Hank restrained himself from revealing his joy. Like a sick coyote, Pete had walked right into the trap. "I'd do the mountin', but don't feel like it's necessary in this case. I'll let Blake do it. Good practice for him." He drew out his purse and examined the meager contents.

"It's —— to be pore, as the old sayin' goes. A man notices it when he gits a chancet to double his money or a place to buy good likker priced fair. I've got eighteen — nineteen — nineteen forty-five. If Blake'll take the rest, we'll sure relieve you uh that troublesome fifty."

Pete went in and put a rope on the mare and led her into an adjoining corral. She was easy to handle, offering little opposition to halter or saddle. Hank snubbed her and Blake mounted.

When the blinder and snubbing halter were pulled off, she merely stood with flattened ears, legs spread wide and a hump in her back that tilted saddle and rider far forward.

Blake touched her with the spurs and swept his hat across her ears. She moved slowly, stepping stiffly as though her legs were made of sticks. She took three of these short, stiff-legged steps, then suddenly, with the speed and snap of a tripped catapult, she went at him. She leaped high and far and fast with tremendous rocking, twisting bounds.

Blake, as was his unvarying custom, went to work with both feet. He rode with an appearance of looseness, maintaining his place by lightning, unerring adjustments of balance rather than by strength of his legs. He scratched from the points of her shoulders to the skirts of his saddle and fanned her with his sombrero. That was his style. He always scratched as long as he stayed in the saddle. If bucked off, he was bucked off scratching.

Hank rode near, beating a tattoo on his horse's flank with his crumpled hat, yelling:

"Attaboy, Blake! Fan 'er, boy! Scratch 'er!"

As though plunging against a cliff, she stopped, her hoofs plowing the ground; then around she went, spinning in a short circle like a huge top, head low, mouth open, bawling and squealing. Like a fragment thrown from a whirling disk by centrifugal force, she leaped straight out at a tangent to her circle, thumped the ground on rigid legs, crouched, all in one swift continuous movement, and hitched back with a terrific wrenching jerk. Then forward she went, sunfishing again, her lithe, taut body twisting and rolling dizzily in the air.

Suddenly Pete Jamison leaped from the fence where he had been seated, hurled his hat to the ground and yelled joyously—

"You're bucked off, cowboy!"

And so he was. Blake was still scratching from the mare's tawny mane to the square skirts of his double rig, but he was palpably off step with her and couldn't catch up. At the next vicious back-hitch he left the saddle, sailing cleanly over her head.

He landed on hands and feet. Cool in the crisis, his first thought was to throw himself from the path of the squealing demon behind him. The mare leaped by him like a streak and kicked viciously in passing. They saw the hoof strike his head, heard the impact. He was knocked backward into a tumbled heap.

Blake had an instantaneous impression of a crashing blow, a blinding stroke of pain that dissolved into a million scintillating points of light which went out quickly in a rush of blackness.

VI

WHEN he awoke, his first sensation was of a vast rhythmic swinging through space, borne down by a leaden weight that dragged on every cell in his body—then he remembered and tried to complete the convulsive effort he had begun—but he seemed to be trammeled in the coils of a lariat. A locked spur seemed hanging in a cinch. He struggled to free himself. In the face of deadly danger he was impotent.

He came nearer the borderland of consciousness. He realized that a pair of hands were pressing firmly upon his shoulders. A voice, a woman's voice, was speaking. He opened his eyes. His body was tense, painfully strained. His hands were gripped in a white coverlet.

A girl with a mass of dark hair, with dark eyes and the reddest of lips, was bending over him. She was strangely familiar. It was night. An oil lamp burned on a table beside the bed.

"You must be quiet," she was saying. "You'll start the blood again."

Blake relaxed wonderingly.

"Who are you? Where am I at?" he asked weakly.

"I am Betty White," she told him. "Don't you remember me? They brought you here after you were hurt. Do you feel better?"

"Don't know." He tried to grin. "Head aches a little more than it did a few minutes ago—or, anyhow, I notice it more. But my eyes are working so I can see you. Yes, take it all around, I guess I'm better." But it took too great an effort to be cheerful. His head throbbed with deadening misery.

"I'm glad," she said. "We were afraid you were dead when they brought you here."

His curiosity in things was gone. The light stabbed his eyes. He closed them and dozed in a state between sleeping and waking. The pain in his head visited his subconsciousness in weird and horrible dreams. He heard people speaking, men and women. Hands touched him and there came the urge to force himself awake. But his will was heavily encumbered.

He received their ministrations passively. He dreamed that his mother, who had been taken when he was barely past his infancy, had laid a caressing hand upon his head and from it radiated peace. In the strange semi-consciousness he caught fragments of sentences.

"How is he, Doc? The voice associated itself with the rumble of racing wild horses—the smoke of a camp-fire.

"Can't tell—fractured—slight concussion—tomorrow——" Blake sank into a deep slumber.

He opened his eyes to the essential light of day filtering through crisp muslin curtains. In a dream he had been floating in a sea of melody. Harmony like a tangible thing surrounded and permeated him. Consciousness revealed that some one was playing a piano, something yearning, and sweet.

Blake, whose durable skull had resisted the blow, and who was recuperating like a tough wild animal, closed his eyes and yielded to the spell of the music. It was simple enough to be comprehensible to him, but its beauty baffled analysis.

It conjured visions of heroic deeds and places, of wild brave men, their roughness justified and sublimated; sunsets flaunting prodigal color over a wide half world of sand; soft deep blue of desert twilight. He felt himself unscathed. Life with all its possibilities stretched before him—action, achievement, concrete realizations of vague ambitions.

His mind reveled; then the fire began departing from his dreams. Images and impulses grew indistinct. Something had gone out of him as color fades from the sky. He realized that the music had ceased.

A clock on the table, where also stood medicine bottles and a partly used roll of gauze, told him it was ten in the morning. It was a rather bare room, but immaculately clean. A rag rug was on the floor, a few lithographs and framed mottos in bold letters bordered with flower designs on the wall.

When Blake suggested that he felt quite well enough to return to work, he was opposed decisively by the Whites. They were backed by the authority of the doctor whom Hank after Blake's injury had ridden a horse almost to death to bring. So he entered upon ten days of new and vital experience.

Mrs. White was a gray-haired, sweet-faced woman to whom Rob bore a striking resemblance. Mark White wore a flowing full beard, black, streaked wtih gray. He was benign of face, possessed of a grave dignity, scrupulously courteous and hospitable. Betty, to Blake by far the most interesting member of the family, was a feminine replica of what Mark White must have been in his youth.

Bob represented a vast disparity in the family. Rebellious at the restraints of his father, who had sharply drawn and somewhat Puritanical standards of conduct, with his first taste of the freedom of manhood he was drifting toward the other extreme.

During childhood his father had relieved him of the necessity of inhibiting impulses to misbehavior. Now he was sampling with the keen relish of a boy for green apples some of the fruits of wildness. He frequently with callow bravado overstepped even the liberal standards of the rough community.

He would have preferred to be the scion of a cattle-king instead of heir to a one-horse outfit which his father, being little greedy of possessions beyond the comfortable necessities, was at little pains to expand. His help was not indispensable at home, and it was little help he gave. He worked for brief periods for widely scattered outfits, or he loafed and wasted his money in any convenient place. He came home when it was advantageous to get his feet under his mother's table.

At times he was too busy being ambitious, with little direction and no persistence to his efforts. At other times, and these most frequent, he was trying with varying degrees of success to be tough.

During Blake's convalescence, Rob was at home for a few days before taking a job with the L-F outfit located south of Riggin, helping in the Fall roundup. At the family board he bowed his head mechanically when his father thanked the Almighty for the food before them and besought Him for further blessings. Then Rob raised his head and told Blake just how far Nibs fell short of being the ideal saddle horse.

"Good plug, that stockin'-legged bay of yours, but too big, away too big. Must weigh round 'leven hundred, don't he? Too heavy on his feet. If he was two hundred pounds lighter he'd be just right."

Blake, turbaned with gauze, his eyes stealing glances toward Rob's altogether adorable sister, tried to answer with a disinterested half of his mind, while with the other and interested half he contrasted her voice and manner with those of other girls he had known.

"Just as good for his inches as a nine-hundred-pound horse. Therefore, he's two hundred pounds better."

"Too big," Rob insisted. "Pushes down too hard on his feet. A light horse can get over the hills like a jack-rabbit. He'll stove his shoulders up."

"He ain't stiff in the shoulders yet, and he's done as much hard work as any horse of his age in the State," said Blake, defending his horse automatically while he noted the bewitching irregularities of Betty's profile. "If he pushes down harder on his feet, at the same time he's got the legs to hold up extra weight. He can carry a man as easy as a horsefly. I like that."

When Hank rode down to see how he was progressing, the talk was likewise carried to horses.

"If that man-killer uh Jamison's had been two-foot farther from you when she let drive, there wouldn't uh been nothin' left uh you but the tombstone I'd been able to buy with three cents less than nothin'.

"You was doin' some oily ridin', boy, the ten or twelve jumps you stayed with her. Gettin' bucked off that she —— don't spell nothin'. I never seen such dizzy steppin' as she done. She's—she's a raggin' fool, that's all."

But Blake's interest in wild horses was in abeyance, and he was glad when the single-minded Hank rode away. Betty White and her piano constituted his new mental set.

The instrument had been freighted-in several years before at considerable expense, and Betty had studied music under her mother since her earliest recollection. Blake could not determine whether music was the refining influence that had wrought the difference he saw in her, or whether it was merely an expression of more essential departures from the usual type of frontier daughters.

VII

BLAKE, with a long scar under his hair where the mare's hoof had split his scalp and seven stitches had been taken, had rejoined McAlister's outfit on the range.

He had never got so little joy out of work. The range conditions in this north country were new to him. McAlister was bossing the round-up in person. He was a stickler for easy handling of cattle and he laid down hard and fast rules against unnecessary roping and all other forms of rough treatment.

There was little excitement. The cutting-out and branding was all done in corrals so that one or two ropers did nearly all the lariat work. Blake, who prided himself on his ability with the riata—and who had long ago won Hank's profound admiration—found himself barred. Satory and Modell, who McAlister knew could be depended upon to obey instructions, did the roping.

It was just work, and dirty work and long hours at that. They tailed down bellowing calves, wielded the red-hot irons, breathed the pungent smoke of the scorching hair and flesh, ripped McAlister's half-crop in the left ear, underbit in the right, and his jug-handle dewlap under the neck. When they got through ripping ear-marks and dewlaps and burning the great Quarter Circle S cattle brand on the side of a four-months-old calf, that baby steer looked like the pitiful relic of a catastrophe.

And after a man had been closely concerned with the wreckage of many score of them in the course of a day, he himself was apt to be black from end to end with blood and dirt and ashes.

The only ameliorative circumstance to Blake was the fact that he had drawn a rough string in the cavvy. He had three snake-eyed, Roman-nosed cayuses who could be depended upon to put up a creditable buck any time after a night's rest, and two more that bore watching every hour of the day.

The restless Blake was prone to encourage rather than to discourage their bucking proclivities. He was never rough with the spurs. In his most reckless scratching he almost never drew blood and seldom ruffled the hair. He was satisfied to go through the motions. But a touchy bronc hates dreadfully to be tickled on the shoulder on a chill morning with the toe of a boot, or to suffer the ignominy of having a rider's foot taken from the stirrup where it belongs and set between his ears.

McAlister objected to that, also.

"A keen spell of buckin' in the mornin' tires a horse as much as three hours ordinary ridin'," he was wont to say. He reiterated at every opportunity: "Now look at Harry Satory there. I ain't seen a bronc really git down an' buck with him a dozen times in the last year. He's easy with 'em. He coaxes the meanness out of 'em."

Which was true. Satory was a top cow hand, a model. Blake would have admitted this without an instant's hesitation. He would, if pressed, have defined a model as a small specimen of the real thing. He readily understood why Harry had no ambition to compete for the prizes in the Maverick rodeos. Even if he had ever had been a good rider, he wasn't now getting enough practice on bucking horses to fit himself for hard competition.

Blake was deliberately preparing himself for the coming show. There was much talk of it around the camp-fire at night, and his ambitions were stirred more and more. Though none of the other boys were going to compete, the event loomed big in their eyes.

McAlister had generously promised to let most of them off for a few days, to ride over and see, at least, the finals bucked out. Blake intended to quit outright in time to get to Maverick and enter for his chosen events.

In the face of his employer's displeasure he was getting all the practice he needed to meet the buckers. But he was getting almost none with the rope and bulldogging was clean out of the question. Even so, aided and abetted by Hank who stayed on a ridge to watch off approaching riders, he grappled with a few of McAlister's peaceful steers and rolled them upon their fat sides.

In one such scuffle he got his shirt ripped from collar to belt and a long scratch down his back. He had to frame a pretty story about an unruly horse and a stiff dead tree limb projecting downward to spring at supper that night.

Altogether, the character of Blake's work was not lifting hin to any pinnacles of glory in McAlister's eyes. Tom would readily have admitted that Blake was willing, that he didn't have a lazy bone in his body, but he was "just simply too —— reckless."

And Blake wasn't caring what McAlister thought about him. He was in funds, very much so, thanks to Israel Brown's and Dick Young's propensity to poker. Besides that there was a fine show coming up at Maverick, a town he had never seen, where he had a chance, though a slender one, to earn several months' wages in three days, and where he had an absolute certainty of having his share of all the fun.

On top of that there was a big dance coming up at Riggin, which he planned to take in despite high water and any and all other obstacles. His interest in the Riggin dance was distinctly private and was not revealed at the camp-fire. It had to do with a certain discovery he had made at Taylor's barn dance during his convalescence at the White ranch.

As regards his connection with Tom McAlister, things were moving toward a climax.

ON THE afternoon before the dance they were trailing a herd toward the corral. A rangy mongrel steer with the legs of an elk and curving horns twice the length of a Hereford's, gave vent to his native contrariness. He whirled from the herd and broke back, tearing down the point of a ridge into a brushy gulch.

Blake and Modell pursued and after a quarter mile run headed him and brought him back. But the sprint only whetted his appetite for trouble. He kept seeking another opportunity to dodge back. The last vestige of Blake's patience vanished. He would teach that steer his A B Cs if he never did another thing in his life. He gathered his rope and shook out a noose.

When the steer again broke away, Blake wheeled his horse and from the steer's left side snapped a loop over its horns. Racing abreast, he flipped the rope across the steer's back and drew it tight across the hind legs. Then he checked his horse.

The big animal's legs were swept from under him by the taut rope and he struck the ground as though he had fallen from a cliff. Blake had busted steers in this manner before. The process never failed to extinguish their desire for mischief. In this case he did more than he had intended. In the fall one of the steer's long horns struck the ground first, received the major portion of the shock and was broken from its head.

Blake leaped to the ground, tied the animal and cut away the hide that still held the broken horn. Then he prodded the stunned beast to its feet. It went back to the herd, the model of docility, shaking its bloody head.

McAlister came riding over and sat looking at Blake as he coiled his rope. Then Tom opened up all his verbal batteries. He, too, had passed the limit of patience.

"Blake," he began, "You've heered me say nine hundred an' eighty-two times that that ain't *my* way of handlin' cattle. It may be *your* way, but I don't give a —— what your style—!" He stopped suddenly as Blake hurled his rope to the ground and faced him with blazing eyes.

"Tom," he said, struggling for composure and deliberation, "cut it out before you get personal and start something we might both be sorry for. I don't give a —— what your style of handling stock may be. I'll save you the trouble of tying a can to me. Write it out, *pronto!*"

With hands that shook with anger McAlister got out a check book and scrawled an order on his bank to pay Blake Moody the small sum due him. Before he had finished Hank was at his side.

"Figger mine, too, Tom," he said cheerfully. "I've got to stay with Blake. He's young an' ignerent an' ain't noway capable uh takin' care of himself among strangers.

McAlister exploded.

"Quit at one second's notice an' leave me short-handed, huh! Hank, this is about the thirty-fourth time I've hired you, but it's the last time!" He went on at some length relieving his internal congestion.

Hank heard him out, grinning blithely.

"It's too bad, Tom, but it's your mistake. Since you was turnin' loose the best cow hand that ever tried to pull a pair uh chaps over spurs with two an' a half inch shanks, I figgered you seen fit to prune down your force."

"You know why I was lettin' Blake go!"

"Yes," Blake said coldly. "Because I quit."

"Well, Tom, thankee kindly, an' farewell," Hank said as he received his check. "Sorry, but you can't expect me to let my young son ride off without me to look after him."

Hank proposed that they start to Maverick forthwith. But Blake opposed him. He was determined to go to the dance at Riggin, and at last Hank yielded under protest.

The two rode down to Riggin.

VIII

RIGGIN consisted of a couple of saloons, a store in the second story of which was the hall where they danced, a feed stable, and a few shacks of rough lumber and tar-paper straggling over an abbreviated flat.

Blake and Hank turned their horses over to a stable-man, kicked off their chaps, adjusted their mufflers and climbed the stairs to the hall. The room was crowded with what seemed to Blake very ordinary men and singularly unattractive, giggling girls and blowsy matrons.

"Not much class here," he commented after searching every nook and corner of the room with his eyes.

"Oh, I don't know," said Hank. "'Bout as much as usual. Anyhow, I don't care. It hurts me as bad to have a good lookin' dame tromp on my toes as a hard lookin' one; so I steer clear of 'em all. Le's go down to the Elkhorn an' see what's goin' on."

Blake followed him down-stairs. He had the feeling that he had ridden down to Riggin for nothing.

"Don't the people from down Clear Creek way take in these dances?" he asked with admirable nonchalance. "I didn't see anything of Jane—what's her name, who played the organ?—or—or any of them girls that was down at Taylor's."

"So!" Hank stopped dead in his tracks. "I might uh knowed, if I hadn't been dead from my shoulders up. If you'd asked me, I could uh told you that you won't never find Betty White at these roughneck parties. At house-warmin's an' barn-raisin's in the neighborhood, maybe, but not these hops at Riggin.

"Her folks is pertickler—an' she's pertickler—who she 'sociates with. I ain't in her class, as you noticed. You wouldn't be, neither, if she knowed as well as I do about your carryin'-ons. You say there ain't nobody here that was at Taylor's. That shows you didn't see nobody in that barn but her. They's several here that was at Taylor's, average good lookin' dames, too.

"If you'd feast your eyes on her, you just go to the Clear Crick school house any Sunday when Sunday school is keepin', an' there she'll be. Next time," he admonished with feeling, "tell me what's on your mind, trust your ol' sidekick what ain't never laid down on you, an' maybe he can save you a long hard ride. We might just as well as not uh been way along on the trail to Maverick by this time. If we miss gittin' there in time for you to enter, blame yourself, not me."

"I didn't notice anything stuck-up about her or her folks," Blake said. "They struck me as dog-gone nice people. Sure treated me fine."

"I ain't runnin' the Whites down. They are nice people, even if they don't 'preciate the sterlin' worth uh my char'ter the way they ought to. Mark White is a prince. Word as good as gold. He draws his social lines on moral grounds, or tries to."

"Didn't work any too good in the case of his son," Blake observed.

"Oh, that's the result of a little too much Sunday school in the tender years. 'Nother case of a preacher's son goin' to the bad. But ol' Rob sure come in handy to the dance the other night. He had a pack horse load uh bonded goods stuffed in the pockets of his chaps an' coat. Jim Taylor's a good *hombre* in some ways, but he'd just nacherally let his company die uh thirst without battin' an eye."

"I never asked you, Hank, but did you come from a long line of ministers?"

"I never clumb my family tree to find out what kinds uh limbs it had. But I wouldn't be su'prized to find most any kind—preachers, bartenders, dooks, pearl-divers, anything but horse thieves. Wouldn't acknowledge them.

"Mark White don't know nothin' about Rob's carryin' on. Nobody tells him. He don't hang around where it's pulled off. His mind don't run that way. He sort uh gives a man the benefit uh the doubt till it's proved otherwise, instid uh turnin' that system end for end like I do. If you'd start goin' to Sunday school, *you* might even get away with it."

"I'm going to do that very thing as soon as I get back from Maverick with my new saddle."

"It'd be just like you! But if you don't want to dance tonight, le's sample the likker an' hit the hay some place. We've got to git an early start in the mornin'. I wish I was poundin' my ear right now."

At the Elkhorn, Hank did not stop with one sample, nor with two. A gang from the L-F, among whom was Rob White, and all of whom he knew, had just arrived. By the time each of them had bought a drink for himself and the rest, they were getting noisy and Hank had changed his mind about the desirability of sleep.

Blake drank meagerly and soberly, unwilling to enter into the spirit of the festivity.

"Let's go and find some place to flop, Hank," he suggested for the third time.

"Say," Hank addressed the bartender loudly, "got any Ol' Squirrel whisky?"

"Ol' Squirrel? No. Got plenty of Ol' Crow."

"I want Ol' Squirrel. This frost has got me down here instid uh hittin' the trail for Maverick like I exhorted him to. Now I want him to wake up an' jump around a little. But I don't want him to fly."

Rob White went out to where his horse stood and leaped into the saddle. A moment later, with rolling eyes and loud breathing, the horse came through the open door, Rob atop of him plying spurs and quirt and singing in a loud voice—

"My foot in the stirrup,
My hand on the horn,
Best —— cowpuncher
Ever was born——"

His companions' glasses rang upon the bar as they took up the refrain,

"With a long ki yippi yippi-a yippi-a
With a long ki yippi yippi-a."

The bartender's poker face showed concern. It augered a wild night which before the end might be strewn with wreckage of almost every kind. Rob wore his gun in a holster on this night. On one or two occasions he had done some practice shooting at lamps. His handsome face was sullen and reckless and he was fingering the butt of his revolver as he began another verse of the ancient song—

"Went down to Chicago——"

Then another voice, more powerful, more sonorous and compelling lifted a totally different air. Blake, leaning near the end of the bar with thumbs hooked in his belt, was singing—

"I'll take you home again, Kathleen,
Across the ocean wild and wide,
To where your heart has ever been——"

Blake was grinning sardonically as he began, but the grin went away as he swept into the spirit of the song. There might have been times when he would have yipped with the wildest of the L-F boys, but on this night he was in a totally different mood. The mood had been born when he first heard Betty White at her piano, and it had grown. He had come down to Riggin in the hope of dancing with her. He put the warmth and tumult of his own heart into the song. And he took hold of his audience.

They broke short off in the middle of a line listening. They were maudlin and he almost brought them to tears. Long before the end of the first verse there was not a sound in the saloon except the restless stamping of Rob's horse and Blake's clear voice.

THE SANG through to the end. Some of the boys cleared their throats. The bartender broke the deep silence.

"Take your horse outdoors, won't you, Rob? He makes so much noise we can't hear good. Then we'll have one on the house.

"By gum, pardner," he told Blake, as the horseman complied with his request, "if I could sing like you can, I wouldn't be tendin' bar, nor punchin' cows, neither. I'd have a good soft job singin' in a vawdyville show, rakin' in gobs uh dough ever' night."

"Thasso," agreed the L-F boys humbly.

"Say, Blake," said Rob with deep respect, "do you know, 'Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie'? I'd sure like to hear you get that off."

"Me, too!" chorused the L-F boys.

"He knows it," said Hank pridefully. "Fellers, if you can jump up any purty song that Blake *don't* know, then I want to put in with you. He's the niftiest vocal singer you'll find in a month's hard ridin'."

Blake sang it. They had another drink. He sang again. And again they drank. The saloon filled up from the street. All patronage deserted the competitive place of business. Blake in his present tender mood was a jewel without price to the Elkhorn. Those present vied with each other in spending their money. They destroyed no furniture and they swore under their breath.

Blake tired at last of singing. Quietly at the end of a song he slipped out and returned to the dance hall where he stood in a corner near the door looking on.

His deserted companions raised their glasses and toasted the empty corner. They set them down and debated the title of the next selection. Then they discovered his absence.

Shortly after came Hank and the gang in search of him. They tramped up the stairs with a great swishing of chaps and rattling of spur rowels. They located the object of their search, surrounded him and expostulated with him for his desertion in loud and earnest voices.

They made a great deal of noise and things began to happen. A floor-manager came demanding order. He was tactless and the manner he assumed most unfortunate.

"If you fellers didn't come here to dance," he said, "anyhow, you've got to act decent an' keep your traps shut. You're makin' too much noise."

Rob White, now free of the spell of Blake's "vocal" singing, turned and faced him squarely.

"Thasso? Do you like to see folks dance?" he asked mildly.

"I ain't pertickler," the burly floor-manager blustered, "but I do like silence an' lots of it."

"Well," Rob drawled, "s'funny how many different kinds of tastes there is. Now, take me, I jus' love dancing. So!" he suddenly barked, "—— you, dance!"

As he spoke a gun appeared in his right hand. It roared, a staggering sound within the four walls. A bullet smashed through the floor shockingly near the man's left foot. There was an uproar of frightened female voices and a sudden thundering stampede from the store below into the street.

The floor-manager began the execution of a series of energetic steps totally lacking in rhythm. He seemed bent only on keeping both feet off the floor at the same time.

Hank and the others had exploded into laughter. Rob had fired twice more through the floor. A determined voice behind them suddenly rasped:

"Reach for the ceiling! All of you! An' keep your mugs that way. This is a decent dance. They's ladies here. Nobody ain't goin' to git away with none of this rough stuff."

The voice belonged to a deputy sheriff who had appeared at the head of the stairs. He was a surly, square-faced man, and he had a gun in each hand, the holes in the barrels of which, Hank afterward swore, were big as stove pipes.

They reached for the ceiling as commanded. There was nothing else to do. The officer was at their backs with guns on them, and he was entirely within his rights and duty.

They were disarmed, marched downstairs and up the street. They were halted before a small building with one barred window. The door was unlocked and they were shoved in.

THE imprisoned rioters easily agreed that this was an unprecedented outrage. They howled and kicked the walls. They found the cot and demolished it. They fought over the blankets and finally went to sleep on the floor.

They began to awaken with the dawn.

"Blake," said Hank, "we ought to uh been hittin' the trail to Maverick by daylight."

"I've been thinking of that a long time," Blake grinned. "It ain't any news to me."

"Looks like this deputy has slep' in. Who is this *hombre*, anyhow? If ol' Sheriff Lamb himself 'd been here, he wouldn't uh pulled off nothing like this. He's strychnine an' carbolic acid in a fracas, but he's got some judgment."

"Lamb is off swappin' lead with some unlucky cuss, I reckon," said one of the L-F boys. "He must uh found this plug-ugly deputy in Jackson's Hole, or some other desperado hang-out, an' brung him here to reform him. But he ain't succeedin'."

"By cracky, Blake, we got to git out uh here, that's all they is to it. We'll be missin' that show. Anyhow, it's plumb awful bein' jailed with a gang uh despurt criminals like these. It's plumb awful."

This sally raised a violent protest from the maligned ones, and three of them stretched the fastidious Hank upon the floor and sat upon him.

They waited for the deputy with the patience of trapped coyotes. One of them tugged at the bars. They were set rigidly. Another kicked the door. It was nail-studded and firm. Hank looked around, down and up. He took hold of a rafter of the ceilingless room, swung his body upward and kicked the roof. The sheeting bent encouragingly from the blow, so he kicked again and again. The crackling of loosened nails grew into the rending of broken shingles and boards. A board came loose, then another. They all scrambled through the rent and slid to the ground.

The town was just awakening as they filed down the street. The sheriff's office was locked. They sought the deputy at the restaurant and found him at breakfast.

He kicked his chair backward precipitately as he rose, reaching for his holsters.

"You're supposed to be in the coop!"

"Right is right," Hank said, holding up his empty hands. "You needn't go smokin' up the room. We're law-abidin' citizens an' believe in abidin' by the law. When we're in jail, we're in the calaboose. But we ain't done nothin' to be kep' in the hoosegow all Summer for. We've got to git to Maverick, or the show'll be helt up an' the crowd kep' waitin'. If you don't let us out —we're givin' you fair warnin'—we're goin' to bust out!"

The deputy was not altogether devoid of a sense of humor.

"Well, since you're here, you might as well eat breakfast. Save me packin' it to you. Then we'll go down an' see the judge."

IX

THEY were on the way to Maverick at last, riding Nibs and Deuteronomy toward the Clear Creek pass. Many long miles of rough trail were before them, and their time was getting short. They approached Tom Harris' run-down ranch.

"Wonder how ol' Tom is feelin' after the dance," said Hank. "We ought to stop an' say hello to the ol' feller. He might be lonesome."

"There's nothing doing," Blake said flatly. "It's a fact Tom may have got his old jug filled up again, but we ain't got time for you to get tanked up this morning. Tomorrow's the last day to enter for the contests. We've got a horse-killing trip at the best. I only wish we had a relay strung along with Nibs on the last short lap.

"I know all that," said Hank. "I don't want only one drink. I had too much last night. Feel like the dickens today. It wouldn't take long to hit the jug just oncet."

"If you get off your horse," Blake threatened, "I'll hop off on top of you and rake you full length. Do you get that?"

"You'll git the worst shakin'-up you ever got in your life, cowboy, if you ever fork me. Besides that, you'll git bucked off an' jumped on with all four feet. Git that?"

"That's a good hand," Blake laughed, "but I've still got something to call with. If you stop at Tom's, I'll ride on and leave you. How do you like that?"

"That beats me," Hank admitted mournfully. "But I would sure like to have about four fingers of that jug under my belt. It would make the world lots rosier. They've got the hardest likker in the saloons an' the hardest floors in the jail at Riggin of any town I ever seen."

But cruel fate defeated Blake's best efforts. As they were skirting Harris' ranch in silence, a figure came to the door of the cabin and beckoned to them with frantic insistence. Swearing with exasperation, Blake followed Hank downward.

Tom's right jaw, bristling with a two weeks' growth of beard, looked as though he were trying at one chew to masticate a whole plug of tobacco. He barely recognized Hank's extravagantly jovial greeting.

"What's the matter, Tom?" Hank asked. "Rattlesnake been workin' on that jaw? Maybe you didn't heed my warnin'."

"Rattlesnake, ——!" Tom rasped. "I've got a tooth that's been achin' fer two days, till it's developin' into big-jaw an' givin' me hydrophoby. Ain't slep' a wink fer two nights. Want it pulled out."

"Pulled out!" exclaimed Hank. "Tryin' to put us to work as soon as we show up! We ain't got time only to take one drink with you. Why ain't you went down to Riggin to the doctor? It's a sagebrush cinch we ain't dentists packin' around a kit uh tools."

"I ain't got time to argy. I want it out! I ain't had no way to git to the city. Cussed range stallion come an' pawed my fence down agin an' led my hosses away. Rheumatics is worse'n ever."

"What can we pull a tooth with? That's a new one on me."

"How'd I know!" Tom shouted, losing all patience. "Blacksmith tongs, wire pliers, a hammer an' cold chisel! What'd I care! It's got to come out or I'm due in the Happy Huntin'— Ow!" He broke off, clasping his jaw.

He dived into the cabin, hauled the stone jug from under the bunk and tilted it to his lips.

"This danged stuff ain't got no more kick than sody pop," he said bitterly. "I could drink a barrel of it in thirty minutes an' never know I had a drop, less'n I could smell my breath."

"Let me see," said Hank. "You may be lyin' to save your likker. Anyhow, I'm strong for sody pop an' such truck, 'specially if it's got a wee bit uh body to it." He raised the jug and drank deeply.

"Your ailments has put you out uh condition to judge likker, Tom," he said kindly, passing the vessel to Blake.

Blake shook his head irritably.

"Let's see what we can do with that tooth," he said, "or rope a horse for him, or something. Then I'm going to get to Maverick in time to enter for them contests if I have to sprout wings and fly."

"Yes!" Tom broke in savagely. "I want action on this tooth!"

Hank seized the jug and took three hurried swallows.

"All right. Quit cussin' an' find something to pull it with. I'm feelin' stronger, now. Bet two thousand eight hundred dollars I can pull the left lower fang of a five-year-ol' timber wolf with two fingers. Like to see the tooth that can git me down!"

Harris had hobbled desperately into a lean-to shed. They followed. There was a disorderly work bench, a primitive forge and a jumble of rusty tools. They examined tongs, pliers and wrenches with their proposed novel use in mind and discarded them. At last Blake found an ancient bullet mold which more than any other instrument at hand resembled forceps.

"Here," he told Hank. "These are the best we can do. Wash 'em off and try 'em."

"Try 'em yourself. You found 'em. I'll hold the victim, bein' stronger'n what you are."

"He won't need no holdin'," Tom said. "He's the interested party."

Back into the cabin they went. Harris seated himself on a stool, tilted back his head and opened his mouth as far as the swelling permitted.

"Now which is the one?" asked Blake.

"Right thar." Harris thrust a grimy forefinger into his mouth, indicating the general direction of the right jaw.

Blake with the implement of torture and former molder of leaden slugs in his hand peered into the orifice. He struck a match to light the dark recesses, and Harris dodged precipitately to avoid a blistered nose.

Finally, after trying various positions, Harris was turned toward the door, clutching the edges of the stool with both hands, Hank supporting his head. Blake settled upon the yellow snag of a molar and inserted the improvised forceps.

"Ugh—gug—gurgle!" Tom moaned as Blake gave a tentative tug with the twelve inch handles for leverage. The senile tooth gave way and was lifted out.

"Oh, lordy!" said Tom feelingly with his face in his hands.

"That don't sound like he's cussin'," said Hank. "I *know* he ain't prayin'. I reckon he's just givin' mild expression to what he thinks is awful pain. Shows Tom is losin' his nerve in his old days.

"Here, take some uh this ginger ale, Tom," he said more sympathetically. "How's she feelin' now? Better? Guess we'll have to hand it to ol' Blake. It's a sagebrush cinch the world lost a good dentist when he took to punchin' cows."

"Fine," said Tom without enthusiasm. "Wall, I don't know. She still pains." He inspected the tooth which Blake had laid on the table, and addressed it, "Ol' boy, you stood by me noble fer fifty or sixty year, tearin' up beef, buffaler steaks an' venison. crackin' nuts an' grippin' good seegars. But you've shore been raisin' the mischief the last two days."

"Now, Blake," said Hank, "as soon as I swaller another little sample uh Tom's good sody pop we can be on our way. We've lost a little time, but we've done Tom an' Hank a lot uh good, that's a sagebrush cinch."

Blake strode desperately to the door where he was arrested by a loud groan from Tom.

"Ugghhh!" Tom prospected again with his finger. "Why you—you——! That ain't the tooth a-tall!" Words failed him. He glared wildly.

"Well, by the looks of it, it's a sagebrush cinch it was ready to come, anyhow," Hank said. "You ain't lost nothin' valuable. But we'll git the real villain if we have to yank 'em all out."

"Now you wipe that grin off'n your face an' be keerful, young feller," Tom told Blake as he picked up the molds again. "If you jerk out any more sound teeth fer me you'll never git to Maverick."

"If you don't keep your mouth open," Blake warned, "there's no tellin' what I'm liable to get a-hold of. I'm just as anxious to get this over with and ride off before Hank gets laid out as you are."

"Sound teeth!" said Hank. "Tom, you ain't had a sound one in your head since you shed your colt teeth."

Blake exercised care and made sure of the offending member. As he put the mold over it, Tom flinched so violently that he overturned the stool and went backward to the floor with an awful crash.

"Hold on!" Blake knelt upon him. "For the first time we've really got in shape for action. Lay right there."

As he started to pull, Harris began to rise. Hank heartlessly pressed him back upon the floor and with laudable presence of mind set one foot upon his forehead and one upon his wildly waving right arm, holding him prone and helpless.

"Now go," he told Blake.

And to an accompaniment of smothered imprecations and inarticulate blasphemies, Blake went. And the tooth went with him.

THE drafted practitioners of dental surgery watched Harris rise slowly, balefully from the floor. He spat a mouthful of blood as he started toward the antlers where his rifle rested. Hank seized and thrust him into a chair, holding him until the homicidal impulse had passed.

"It shore feels better," he said, relaxing. "Glad you got it. Le's see that jug now, if it ain't empty."

Danger averted, Hank collapsed. He roared, strangled and coughed. He sank helplessly to the floor where he rolled and howled with his arms clasped over his abdomen.

Tom eyed him with profound disgust.

"You must think it's danged funny, young feller. I've got my private opinions of a man that laffs at the tortures of his feller humans."

Hank's paroxysm of mirth gradually subsided and he rose to his feet wiping his eyes.

"For ——'s sake, let's go, Hank," said Blake from the door.

"All right. But first I've got to have one more little shot uh this nerve tonic. That was tryin' labor."

"I'm shore glad you boys come by," Tom said gratefully. "You done me the world of good. When it comes right down to it, without no more practice than you've had, you know more about pullin' teeth than nine out of ten of these new-fangled mouth-doctors. An' that ain't sayin' much fer you," he added as an afterthought. "Did I ever tell you about that danged dentist that wanted to pull all my teeth, good ones along with the rest? After my money!

"If you have a lot of luck over to the rodeo an' happen to git aholt of a gob of easy money, don't fergit what I told you about the wisdom of investin' in some good property. It can't git away from you if you do that. Of course, there'd be a little fixin'-up fer you to do around the buildin's an' corrals and so forth, but I've got a hundred acres of as good land as ever laid out of doors, an' worlds of range jest off the back yard."

"A *little* fixin'!" said Hank. "You mean a *lot* uh fixin'. Do you think we want our wife to be sooin' for divorce the first day? But we'll like as not buy the ranch when we git back, twine string-an' toothpick-fences an' all. I've talked to Blake like a father about the evils uh matrimony with tears in my eyes big as baseballs, time an' time ag'in. But it don't do no good.

"Here lately he's aimin' to git married. He rode all the way to Riggin to dance with one dame. She wasn't there, an' he got so blue I had to git the deputy sheriff to take his gun off him an' lock him up to keep him from commitin' sideways."

"I don't doubt it," said Tom. "When a young feller dances with one gal all night, don't notice none of the other young ladies, it's nigh time he was fixin' up a place to raise his family in."

"Good bye, Hank," Blake called from the yard. "I'll tell you how Maverick looked when I get back."

"I'm comin'," Hank yelled as he seized the jug hurriedly. "Just three seconds, Blake, for a taste uh this ice cream sody, an' I'll be with you."

Hank weaved to his horse, swung into the saddle and gripped his knees under the swell of the fork. Then he defied all the laws of gravity.

"Blake," he said, "I love you like a brother. I love you like four brother an' three sisters. I want you to git to Maverick in time to win that silver mounted rig more'n you do. Therefore, I'm goin' to do something for you. You ain't afraid of a rough trail, are you?"

"No!" Blake had tumbled from the ragged edge of his patience. "Hank, in the name of ——'s bald-headed bartender, shut up and lead out! I could ride to Maverick by way of Kansas City before you'd get through talking."

"All right, cowboy. We'll go north instid of east for a ways. I'm goin' to Maverick the way a crow would fly, if he had any brains—the shortest way.

"I'll lead you over a trail that'll make your eyes bug out till you could knock 'em off with a pitchfork handle, where if ol' Nibs steps six inches too far to one side he'll roll a mile down a hill so steep a magpie has got to put on britchin' before he can fly down."

They followed stock trails northward around Mt. Minidoka to Blue River and turned up the canyon. As they advanced it grew steeper and steeper, the walls more abrupt, the stream more precipitate, tumbling, boiling down an unending series of rapids. Soon they approached the mouth of a black gorge which the water had slashed through the granite buttresses of the range like a wound. Here it is swirled among and over giant boulders, falling against a cliff on one side, recoiling to a wall of black rock on the other.

Hank, leading, turned in his saddle grinning with sardonic glee and shouted something, but his voice was drowned in the thunder of falling water. He turned from the stream and pushed his horse up a treacherous shell rock slide, then followed a ledge around the cliff so narrow that a horse had almost to walk on air, with jagged rocks and white water a hundred feet below. Whenever possible to take his eyes from the trail, he looked back grinning.

Blake shut his teeth and followed without visible hesitation. He stayed on his horse, though on the narrowest parts of the shelf he had to take his feet from the stirrup on the inside and draw up his leg while Nibs, trembling, rubbed his side along the rock, utilizing every inch of space.

They passed the point and found a breathing space. Here the cliffs bent back forming a tiny, almost circular valley where the stream flowed smoothly through quiet pools and for a hundred yards the going was easy.

"What'd you think of it?" Hank asked. "That was just a starter."

"I thought you said you was going to show me a rough trail, and here you go leading off down a reg'lar bowlyvard."

"You ain't kiddin' me. I could see the ol' eyes buggin' out. This trail, cowboy, is the Hank Fairless trail. Nobody, as I know of, don't know nothin' about it—don't even know its name. You ask Jim Taylor, or Tom McAlister, or Satory or any of 'em an' they'll tell you Blue Canyon ain't passable for cow, steer, bull or cayuse—ain't passable for nothin' except cougars an' bob cats.

"But ol' Hank Fairless don't bel'eve all he hears, or even much of what he sees. He tried this trail oncet when he was in a —— of a hurry to git to Maverick. An' he's just as much alive as ever—though it's a fact he ain't growed much since. This way, it's only 'bout thirty five miles from White's ranch to Hitchcock's Basin, ag'inst seventy around by Clear Crick."

At the upper end of the little valley they left the creek bed, zigzagged up the right hand wall and went onward along the almost perpendicular mountain side. Their trail was at the upper rims of sheer walls of rock, cliffs above, fearsome depths below from which came the subdued thunder of cataracts. The broken deer trails they followed dropped or climbed abruptly past fallen trees and impassable points of rock.

It was late afternoon when they emerged from the canyon into a high basin, green with lush wild grass in a setting of giant peaks. Blue River headed there, leaving the basin on the west in a sheer drop of a hundred feet. The streams following the canyons between the peaks on the north and east also found their sources in the springs fed by the rotting drifts in the clefts of the naked peaks.

They camped that night in the meadow and at sundown next afternoon were in Maverick.

X

IT WAS a cow town of two thousand inhabitants normally, the population now enormously inincreased by the show. Stockmen and punchers had gathered in some hundreds of horses who harbored inveterate antipathy to anything on their backs.

Many fleet horses were there to be ridden in races by cowgirls and squaws, cowboys and Nez Perce braves. There were long-horned, long-legged, wild and nimble steers to be turned loose in the arena for ropers to perform on, and bulls that were deemed unridable.

It was a goodly place and goodly time, several days given over to festivity while sober business was laid aside and people swarmed in for the fun. The streets were full of horses bearing Indians in ancestral paint and feathers and cowboys gorgeously appareled.

"A lot of them couldn't ride a ringboned, knock-kneed, spavined jackrabbit," said Hank with a disapproving eye on the brilliant silk shirts and mufflers, "but they think they look like seven hundred dollars on a gentle horse."

Blake turned his jaded horse over to a stable-man with brief and decisive instructions about oats, blanket, and, above all, special care at the watering trough until Nibs had cooled off. He dropped a dollar tip into the man's hand and hurried to the Rodeo headquarters. There he signed up and paid his entrance fees for the bucking, bulldogging and roping contests. Then, for the first time in two days, his mind was free of anxiety.

They had two days to kill before the show opened. On the night of the second day, Blake and Hank, seeking diversion in different lines, were separated. Near midnight, somewhat the worse for many drinks, Hank found Blake at a table in a crowded back room. He was bucking a blackjack game against a worried dealer. A great pile of counters, coins and bills were before him. Rob White was playing at the table, also, but his visible supply of wealth was not large.

As Hank shouldered his way to Blake's side he saw Jeff and Pete Jamison and two or three of the L-F boys in the crowd.

"Your pardner's goin' strong," one of the L-F hands told Hank. "He's blame nigh made a porper out uh that twenty-one dealer. If they's enough money back uh the game, an' his luck holds, he can buy the house before mornin'."

"Oh, boy!" Hank whispered ecstatically. "Enough kale to buy all the likker in the world!"

He watched Blake, betting the limit, draw two face cards. The dealer turned over nineteen. Rob had also bet the limit, and his cards counted seventeen.

Hank had no time to sympathize with Rob.

"Pay us!" he shouted, smiting Blake between the shoulders. "Oh, whiteface steers an' bunch grass! What's the use uh workin'!"

The cards were dealt again. This time Blake drew an ace and a king. Rob had drawn to a face card and four spot. He drew a jack, which made him too many.

"Twenty-one!" bellowed Hank. "That's the name uh the game! Pay us oncet an' a half!"

The dealer drew in the last of Rob's money, added more to it and paid Blake.

Rob looked on for a few minutes and saw Blake win time after time with a marvelous run of luck. Then he walked over to Jeff Jamison.

"I've been in town three hours, Jeff. Now I'm broke. I've got to have some jack or I might as well leave. Lend me fifty."

"Not to buck no games with," the saturnine Jeff told him bluntly. "You can't play cards for sour owl grease."

"I don't want to gamble any more."

"Well, sure. But no poker or blackjack, mind you."

"Much 'bliged, Jeff. If I never pay you, you'll always have it coming, so you'll never be without resources."

"Oh, I ain't afraid about gettin' paid. If you have trouble savin' up that much coin, you can do some work for me, help me out some way. We'll figure out some way so it won't be too hard for you to pay it back."

"—— of a note for Mark White's son to be suffering for want of spendin' money. The old man's a good Injun, but he ain't the fastest money-maker in the world by a long shot. He hit this country a long, long time ago. He had just as good a chance to pick up a quarter of a million as that stiff-necked old grouch of an Is Brown. But he didn't do it, and the result is I can't pay my way in a fast game more'n thirty minutes at a time."

Rob had drunk three stiff highballs before sitting into the blackjack game.

"I've got a picture of Mark White financin' any gamblin' for you if he had three quarters of a million." Jeff grinned sourly. "Not unless you frisked his pockets."

Blake was still winning, and Hank was at his side, gesticulating and uttering loud, profane ejaculations of joy. But a thing as good as that couldn't last forever. The dealer, grinning gamely, paid a final bet and announced the game broke.

"Aw, that's luck for you!" Hank wailed. "Just when we git to cashin' in, the mint breaks down!"

But his eyes shone as Blake scooped his small fortune into his hat, filling it to the rim, and counted the money over to the bartender to be put into the saloon safe.

The house drank on him twice, from wealthy cattlemen to mooching stew-bums.

"What's the use uh workin'!" reiterated Hank as he tossed down the second drink. "I travel with a ranny what rides with the new moon shinin' on his right shoulder."

"Seems to be a lot better playin' cards than bustin' broncs," observed the saturnine Jeff Jamison.

"Huh!" Hank whirled upon him. "He can play cards, that's a sagebrush cinch, but the way he plays cards ain't nothin' to the way he can claw a high-steppin' mustang. I've got—le's see how much I got that says he wins the saddle. I'm backin' ol' Blake Moody even ag'inst the field."

He dug to the bottoms of his pockets and found thirty-two dollars and a few cents. He slammed the coins upon the bar.

"Now back up your talk. Cover that thirty-two bones an' two bits. Put up or shut up!"

"You seem to be forgettin' that Sally Patica ain't dead yet," Jamison said as he placed the equivalent of Hank's total wealth in the bartender's hands.

"Huh!" Hank had forgotten, but he came back bravely. "What'd I care for that line-back crowbait! Blake can ride 'er bareback with slick heels. He's onto her style now."

"I see him git off her style once in short order." And for the benefit of the crowd, Jeff briefly sketched the incident in the Clear Creek corral and emphasized Hank's loss of his last dollar.

The laugh that Jeff's recital provoked led Hank off the subject for effective repartee.

"WHAT'S the matter with you, Jeff, is you've got a ringbone in your brain. Your thinker, whenever you try to use it—which, —— knows, ain't often—cripples along like a stove-up stage horse."

"You'll have a ringbone in your jaw, if you keep on runnin' off at the mouth much longer," Jamison threatened angrily.

"You ain't man enough to put it there," Hank stated belligerently, thrusting out his face. Trouble started immediately.

Jamison swung, going clear to Missouri for the wallop. It was a powerful blow but badly directed. The fist missed the jaw and damaged itself on Hank's adamantine skull.

Almost instantly the fighters were in a circle a scant two paces wide, walled by a close-packed mass of men. A six foot ring was room enough for Fairless and Jamison. They fought without science, standing toe to toe, and launched awkward blows, driving them with all the weight of their strength and enmity into unprotected heads and bodies. Eyes puffed, noses and lips bled. All their genuis was for offense, none for defense. Ultimate victory was purely a question of which could longer endure the punishment.

Five minutes of whirlwind action and they both were nearing exhaustion. They moved closer, glaring, snarling, smote each other, clutched and swayed, straining from side to side, each bent on getting the other nethermost upon the floor.

Pete Jamison edged around to where Blake stood in the inner circle.

"It's even ain't it?" said Pete.

"Looks like it."

"What say we stop it? No use to let the danged fools beat each other to death. The crowd's gettin' a danged sight more fun out of it than they are."

"Suits me. Get ready to grab your man."

He waited until Pete wrapped his arms around his brother; then he shot out an arm, seized Hank by the shirt collar and jerked. Hank was torn from his adversary's clinch and overbalanced. Blake ran backward through the crowd and out the door. Hank could not regain his equilibrium and could only wave his arms wildly, sputtering and strangling.

"You're a fine friend!" he stormed when Blake released him. "Just when I'm gittin' him where I want him, you drag me off uh him! Why didn't you let me beat that guy to death! Main reason I come back to this ——-forsaken country!"

"I felt sorry for him!" Blake said, inspecting Hank's beefy face. "Besides, I want you to herd the buckers for me tomorrow. Now let's find a restaurant and get a good thick steak, raw, for that map of yours."

"I'll herd the buckers for you, all right. But some uh these days when you're draggin' me off uh somebody you're goin' to make a miss lick an' choke me plumb to death." Hank felt of his throat. "Then you'll feel dog-gone sorry whenever you ride by my grave."

"The biggest danger comes when I'm draggin' you from under somebody," Blake said.

XI

BLAKE rode two hard and showy buckers the first day, scratching even more recklessly than any reasonable judge would have required. Between whiles he dived from the galloping Nibs and grasped the horns of speeding steers. He brought them up standing, then hurled them from their feet while judges held stop-watches on him, and lay in the wide hollow of horns holding them with teeth clenched on bovine lips, his arms extended. He roped and tied steers against time.

The second day was a repetition of the first, except that the contestants against whom he rode were fewer in number and more skilful than had been the average of the day before.

On the first day Jamison's buckskin mare eliminated three of his competitors for the saddle by rolling them ingloriously in the dust; and on the second, two more. She unloaded them, good riders though most of them were, so quickly and with such small expenditure of energy that the management used her again and again.

She was a wise outlaw who never struggled against rope, halter, or saddle, but conserved all her wind and strength to use against the rider.

On the third day with the semi-finals bucked out, the contest narrowed down to the final three, Blake and Hank were at the rear side of the arena where the corrals and stables were located.

Hank was sober and more palpably nervous than Blake. His anxiety was touching. They heard a rider and horse announced.

"Strychnined Heely Monsters!" said Hank. "Wish that broom straw of a Slim Doke could uh drawed that line-back streak uh greased lightnin'. She'd boost him into the bleachers. By golly, Blake, they was two chances in three ag'inst you gittin' her. Accordin' to the luck you been playin' in so far, you surely won't draw her. I want you to git a good horse, a horse that jumps so hard an' crooked an' high that only 'bout two men in the world can stay in the saddle three jumps; but I don't crave to see you mount a horse that *no* man can ride! It's good night nurse for the *hombre* they put up ag'in them Jamison's Epsom Salts."

They saw the outlaw, one Shoestrings by name, led into the arena, head high, ears twitching, mane tossing. They watched Slim Doke mount. And they saw him make a beautiful ride on the lean black horse, who with his lightning, crooked leaps had had his share of the conquests in the past two days.

"Listen at the danged fools yell!" Hank snarled as the grandstand and bleachers rocked with cheers of approval. "A sick Chinyman could ride that rockin' horse sideways."

The vanquished outlaw was led away. Doke stood before the grandstand and bowed sweepingly to the applause.

"Listen!" The megaphones began bawling that the next rider up would be Blake Moody on Sally Patica. "Oh, my pore orphant children!" Hank groaned. "Who said little Hank an' Blake could ever have any luck!"

"I've knew it ever since last night," was Blake's astounding statement, "when I pulled her name out of a hat. I'm tickled to death. The bird that rides that mare will win the saddle whether he's the best rider or not."

A mighty cheer had come from the crowd. Both names had become very familiar during the past two days, Blake as a graceful daring rider, the mare as an unridable bundle of erratic steel springs bound in pale yellow hide. Blake and the wild mare were stars in the barbaric show.

Hank did not share the pleasurable thrill of the crowd.

"Boy," he said glumly, "the ol' moon's sure failed us. If I had a moon that brought me luck by gittin' my dome caved in, got me jailed an' my char'ter an' pocketbook damaged without no cause, led me up till I could touch the horn of a five-hundred-dollar silver-mounted saddle with the tips uh my finger nails, an' then wouldn't let me walk off with it, boy, I'd lay off uh that moon."

"Don't you think I'm going to ride the buckskin?"

"No. Do you?"

"Watch me."

"You mean to have my rope ready to drag you out from under her after you hit the ground. That she-——'s a female steamboat. I know you can ride, Blake, ride with the best of 'em; but I've got my doubts about any ranny stickin' her out without lockin' his spurs, hobblin' his stirrups, an' pullin' leather with both hands. She—she ain't human, that's all. An' the man she bucks off ain't goin' to win no saddle."

"You're about as cheerful as a starving buzzard, today," Blake told him. "You don't scare me, but you sure do give me a pain."

"Hank carried Blake's saddle in one hand as he rode down before the crowd. Blake in scarred chaps and drab flannel shirt walked beside him. The mass of humanity in grandstand and bleachers shouted and waved to the gladiators.

Then silence settled down as they waited for hope to be realized or blasted. For all, from the purest tenderfeet to the critical judges, knew that this ride if successful determined the championship. The mare had seemed unconquerable. Already she had eliminated riders, two at least among the five, championship caliber. If Blake stayed with her, the decision was foreordained.

Hank took the halter rope and drew the mare's nose up the horn of his saddle. An attendant cinched on the rig while Blake watched carefully. Then, to all appearance perfectly cool, he swung into the saddle, settled his feet in the stirrups and grasped the single rope rein.

"Good luck, cowboy," said Hank tragically as he unsnapped the snubbing halter to draw it off.

"Quit crying, turn her loose and watch us go," Blake said grimly.

Hank jerked off halter and blinder and swung his horse away.

The mare went instantly into action. With a deep-throated bawl she leaped, high and far, twisted in the air like a great cat and struck the ground at right angles to the direction she had started. Gathering herself without an instant's loss of time, the second leap began as the first ended, and again and again, twisting, snapping, striking the ground with her forefeet at such an angle that her shoulders were almost on the ground. Only her unbelievable strength and agility enabled her to hold her feet at all.

Few men in the crowd—though many had spent their lives on the range—had seen such bucking.

And Blake—? As Hank watched, fear for his friend went away and frenzied delight took its place. Blake was staying in the saddle, swaying easily to the brain-addling twisting of the horse. His sombrero was brushing the mare's ears and hips; and each time she left the ground his boots described a long arc between her neck and the skirts of his saddle.

She had bucked him off once fairly; but in that and in a half dozen succeeding exhibitions she had revealed her style to him. On this day before the frantic crowd he rode. fanned and scratched her to a finish, outguessing her through all her sunfishing, pivoting, back-hitching, and crooked plunging until she was beginning to slow up from exhaustion, and Hank, at a sign from the judges, galloped alongside and lifted him from the saddle.

WHEN they left Maverick, Blake was riding the silver-mounted saddle. He had received the cash which was part of the prize in the bucking contest. He had second prize in the bull-dogging and first in the steer-roping. Altogether, with those prizes and his winnings in the blackjack game, he was heavy with wealth and local fame.

"Now what do you aim to do with all the money an' notoriety you got in this man's country?" Hank asked as they rode away. "I'm beginnin' to git worried about you. I'll never say nothin' ag'in the moon no more."

"I'm going to leave the jack in the bank for the time being and enter for first money in the Clear Creek Sunday school."

"I suppose you're just tryin' to kid me," Hank said. "But I can't tell, you might be just that foolish. And with that moon backin' you, I ain't got a doubt you could be the biggest preacher in the world in thirty days, if you tried, an' married to the Queen uh Spain in the bargain."

"I wish I'd never said nothin' about Sunday school to you. I didn't mean no harm. It just sort of slipped out when I said it. Still, if you do go wrong, my conscience will always hurt me."

XII

ON THE Sunday following his return from Maverick, Blake dressed himself carefully in the thoroughly presentable suit he had bought in the rodeo town and rode to the Clear Creek school house on Nibs and his new saddle.

Before he reached it the frontier temple bell was tonguing the call to worship. With more trepidition than facing the redoubtable outlaw had evoked, he entered the school room, and striving to be inconspicuous, took a seat far in the rear, where in his isolation he loomed like an unskilfully blotched brand.

His eyes swept the little congregation and located her. Betty was in virginal white.

Blake was not allowed to remain long in isolation. He was made welcome and introduced into the Young People's class, which consisted principally of young women. He tried his best to bear himself with dignity and poise, and the effort made him a very quiet young man.

After the meeting the folks crowded around him, to his unmitigated discomfort, insisting that he promise to come again.

Mark White did more than that. He came down the aisle with his wife and daughter. Betty greeted him shyly. Mrs. White in motherly manner inquiring particularly after all the details of his health. Mr. White shook Blake's hand warmly and said he was glad to see him lending other young fellows a good example. And actually invited him home with them to dine.

Of such luck Blake had not dreamed. It was nothing short of a miracle—or moon-magic.

There were other guests, two neighbor families. Blake learned that the Whites always kept an open house on Sunday.

There were at first no other men except the husbands and fathers of the two families, among whom was Jane Compton's father.

But a little later in the afternoon, to Blake's downright annoyance, appeared Dick Young.

He came into the house smiling with what seemed to Blake a proprietary air. His expression changed somewhat at sight of Blake.

"Hello, Young."

"How're you, Moody. I hear you packed off about everything that was loose around Maverick."

"I left the recreation park," Blake said, "so somebody else would have a place to work next year. How's things around the Bar Y?"

"Not the best in the world. Lost a yearlin' with blackleg the other day. Sent to the outside for a veterinary. If I was a good poker player and bronco-buster, believe I'd just quit ranching."

That was something of an underhanded thrust, since anything in the nature of gambling was taboo in the White home.

"Well," said Blake, his eyes level and unsmiling, "I don't claim to be extra good at either one; but if you decide to make the change, I'll do all I can to find somebody fit to give you lessons."

Between the two young men there was no apparent difference in station. No longer did Young eclipse Blake in the matter of apparel. He had paid a tailor at Maverick a sum running into three figures for a perfectly fitting suit. If anything, his clothes were in better taste than the rancher's, fully as rich, and less pretentious.

Dick's arrival brought temporary restraint upon the younger members of the party. Jane strove to dispel it.

She commanded Betty to sing. And Betty sang a simple love song to her accompaniment. She commanded Young, who had listened entranced, to sing.

"Lord, Jane," he said. "You know I don't know anything that's fit to sing. And you know I couldn't sing it if I did. I'd rather just listen."

"So should we. We like to be entertained as well as you. Haven't you learned that in this life the piper must be paid? Surely you are willing to pay your share."

"That ain't fair, Jane," Young said, flushing. And with secret joy Blake remembered Hank's characterization of the afflicted and highly endowed girl.

"She don't care a whoop how hard she shoots it into a feller," Hank had said.

"Darn it, Jane," Young went on. "Nobody ever saw me try to squirm out of paying my way when I had anything to pay with. But I don't propose to stand up beside that pie-ano and beller for your amusement."

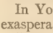
"Isn't it dreadful, Dick," said Jane, "to be summoned to a path of glory and then be found wanting?"

In Young's flushed face was unqualified exasperation.

"Now, Blake," Jane said, "if you fail me —I don't care how poor your effort may be, so it's honest—if you fail me outright, I'm going to scream and tear my hair. What will you sing?" She smiled at him impishly.

"Don't know." Blake rose to his feet. "Play it."

Her slim fingers fluttered over the keys and there came forth the first bars of a hymn.



FOR THE descendants of the pioneers who builded these United States, bankers, butchers, brokers and cowpunchers, the ringing old hymns are part of their heritage. No one would ever have committed the error of ranking Blake as a churchman. Perhaps choirs had sent their voices to him through open windows as he passed. It may be that Salvation Army lassies had sung the hymn into his memory—and Blake's memory had been peculiarly fashioned for the retention of songs and airs—from before saloons in cow towns.

Jane looked over her shoulder with the mischievious smile as she began, but as Blake launched into the song her smile gave way to a look of wonder.

"When we walk with the Lord, in the light of His Word,
What a glory It sheds on our way.
When we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey."

She played one verse and the chorus, then paused and, by a coincidence that to Blake seemed too striking to be accidental, struck into the prelude of "I'll take you home again, Kathleen." He saw in it an omen of the goddess. Fortune, who had been smiling so persistently upon him, and all his self-assurance rushed back to him.

If he had sung well at the Elkhorn, he was a scintillating artist in Mark White's parlor. His voice was a baritone of surprizingly good quality and range, and he sang with feeling. As he finished, Jane turned on her stool.

"You *can* sing. You can *sing*. You are quite the most wonderfully versatile cowboy I have ever known—not even excepting Richard Young. But then Dick is a rancher, anyway.

"However, I have no doubt you well know how wonderful you are." She turned back to the keyboard.

Then fate, which seemed dogging Young's footsteps that day, smote him. One of his men came galloping on a sweaty horse with news that the looked-for veterinary had arrived at the Bar Y with a proposal for wholesale and indiscriminate injection of blackleg serum into all the numerous individuals of the herd. Dick's immediate presence was urgently required.

He made his adieus without the best grace in the world and rode away.

Blake tried his utmost to feel sorry that the deadly malady was threatening the cattle of that section, but the best he could do was to feel profound relief that Young had gone.

The old folks came in to listen and to give unstinted and sincere praise. The afternoon was briefer than an hour in the saddle at the tail of a bawling herd.

Blake with Betty and Jane walked along the road beside the river. The sun was dropping down to the jagged crest of the Seven Devils. The color that was rising in the sky was mirrored in the stream, the coral and amethyst, the jade and royal purple. There was magic in the time and place, and the witchery was stealing into Blake's soul.

They were three young of the species, with youth's understanding of the moods of youth. Jane voiced Blake's restlessness. She hummed a sentimental air, Then—

"I wish we had the piano out here beside the water. I'd like to hear Blake sing under the sky. The acoustics of that little room aren't right for his voice. You must serenade me some moonlight night, Blake, and sing 'Juanita.' Bring with you someone who can strum a guitar. You don't need really to mean it. Just sing as though you do. That's all I ask. Imagine me Betty, if you wish.

"Isn't the world just achingly beautiful? I wish I were a great poet, or a lovely and talented actress with a voice sweet as a silver bell. How do you like this?" And she declaimed:

"—And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it is inherit, shall disolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made of; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

Blake had never read "The Tempest," but he knew that the bard had spoken truly. He felt poignantly the transiency of all things, colored days that passed never to come again, opportunities that would not be repeated before the day of doom.

The rattle of Mr. Compton's two-seated carriage sounded behind them mingled with the quick hoof-beats of his light driving team. Blake handed Jane into the vehicle while the spirited horses champed their bits and pranced; goodbys were said; the bays were given rein. Blake and Betty were alone in the magic twilight.

"Isn't she a wonderful girl?" Betty said, looking after the departing carriage.

Blake did not answer, but the intensity of his gaze drew her eyes to his.

"A penny for you thoughts," she said.

"Do you know," he said with fine irrelevance, "I'm beginning to like your Sunday school. I never knew before that Sunday school was so darn interesting."

"You must have begun to change very recently." She smiled. "I heard of your luck at Maverick. If Sunday school and the chance to ride a wild horse conflict, which will you choose?"

"Not the horse. I've reformed. I'm going to buy a ranch, save my money and be rich and stingy and good the rest of my life."

"This wonderful reformation doesn't seem to have worked much change in your appearance. I suppose it's still all below the surface. You look no better—I mean, no different."

"But I am, just the same. I'm a different man. Say, do you like poets better than bronco-busters?"

"I never knew one. Please don't ask me to believe that you are out to win a saddle writing poetry."

"I ain't got that far. In fact, I'm just beginning to feel the need of poetry. The thoughts in my head are quite a bit like a band of Nevada mustangs that's just been hazed off the desert, down a cañon and into a willow corral they hadn't known was there. Here they are, milling, snorting, circling the fence, looking for a way out. You've got to get a good rope on said mustang and jerk a few kinks out of him before he's any good.

"That's where poetry comes in. When thoughts like I've been having the last few weeks get corraled in my head, ordinary words are no better than binding twine—can't hold 'em. Poetry is the good riata that hauls the front legs out from under 'em and holds 'em down for the saddle. When you've got something to say that's way way above the average, ordinary words don't turn the trick.

"WILL you let me tell you some poetry? It's almost as good as what Jane was saying."

"Surely," she said. "Naturally I'm terribly interested in these mustang-thoughts of yours."

Blake's eyes were unsmiling.

"I suppose you think I didn't mean what I said about your Sunday school. I do, though. Till just lately I never thought much about immortality; but I like the idea. This life is a good show—hills, winds, deserts, people having fun and trouble, and good horses. But it's too short. No sooner do we start to live than we get old and ready to die. Immortality—I like it. Maybe we can get another whirl at the game in another life."

"Why, of course," she said seriously. "I supposed everybody believed in a future life. I don't want to die. I want to live forever. And I want the things I love to live forever, Jane and—and I like my piano better than a harp."

"But don't you like to live just the way things are on this old world? Can't you have a cracking good time, no matter how far we may be living from Heaven?"

"Why, yes, surely. I'm happy—that is, most always."

"Now in regard to this poem—I ain't claiming I wrote it. I'm using somebody else's riata to rope my ideas. He's got a better rope than mine. He can get hold of the thoughts, say what I mean, better than I can. But it's mine now. It says exactly what I want to say."

His voice, flexible and colorful, gave good expression to the poem.

"A Norseman's ship on a Norseman's sea,
And the grim, gray northern sky;
A straining sail and a line of shields
As the freezing waves fling by.
I was the Norseman and prayed to Thor
In the seas of the berg and floe;
And you were a maid on the homeward shore
In the days so long ago."

A flush stole into her face. "This is just a poem, isn't it?"

"Yes. A poem that's got my thought in a noose.

"A breathless sea and a setting sun
And the end of a losing fight.
Just a sinking ship and a Norseman's death.
Then a silent northern night.
I was the Norseman. With many more
I answered the call below;
And you were a maid on the homeward shore
In the days so long ago."

"You are choosing less picturesque ways to die in your reincarnation." She tried to break him from his seriousness. "An outlaw horse doesn't compare in romance with a Norseman's galley."

"Listen:

"In other lives, in other times,
I have loved you and wooed and won.
We have lived and loved with the old, old love
Till each short life was done.
Through endless life, through endless time,
While the deep tides ebb and flow,
We shall love and meet on the homeward shore
As we did so long ago."

She could summon no light repartee with which to meet him. Her eyes had fallen, color played in her cheeks.

The light had dimmed to deep twilight. There was silence except for the murmur of the stream and the whisper of a scented breeze.

"That's you and me, Betty," Blake's vibrant voice had grown husky. "When I first seen you, I knew you. I've loved you for a million years."

The red lips for which he had hungered met his. Then she struggled from his arms.

"Blake, I won't be swept away like this! I won't! I won't! I hardly know you. I don't know who you are, nor where you're from, nor what you plan to do with your life."

"You know me as well as you'll ever know anybody, Betty. I'm just what I look and sound like. My past life is a dream, good and bad. I've just found why I was ever put on earth—to love you. That is my business from here on out.

"If you're bound to be practical—I told the truth about buying that ranch. I can make as much money as your father makes. You can do anything you've been in the habit of doing. And, if you say so, I'll even join the church."

"I don't want to be practical, I want—Come back next Sunday—no, tomorrow. I want you to go now."

"Tell me first if you love me."

"Yes," she whispered breathlessly, "but I'm not at all sure that I should. Now let me run home and cry."

But she was persuaded to weep in his arms instead. Then she raised her wet face and admitted tremulously that she was glad and happy.

Late stars were rising when they parted lingeringly at the gate.

Prowling night beasts heard Blake's clear voice ringing as he rode slowly along the rough dirt road with his reins loose on his horse's neck. Nibs had eaten his fill of hay in Mark White's barn, and Blake was full of the music of the spheres.

If the gang at the Elkhorn had heard him sing "Juanita" that night, surely he would have touched them all to tears.

XIII

BLAKE was at Tom Harris' place shortly after sunrise next morning. He roped the string-halted roan from the range and rode with Tom to Riggin. There they had the papers fixed up.

Blake cleared the mortgage held by Brown and paid in cash to Harris a greater sum than the old man had owned in many moons.

"You'll find this is the wisest move you ever made," Harris said quaveringly. "I like to see a young feller savin' his money an' investin' in good sound property. There ain't no reason why you can't be as rich as Is Brown inside twenty years, maybe richer. It's the right kind of a move. Your coin can't run out through holes in your pockets now."

"It's the right kind of a move for you, anyhow, Tom," Blake laughed. He well understood that Tom's tremulous joy was largely for his own sake. "Now if you'll take an old man's advice, you'll fit up that cigar store before the money gets away from you."

"Well, I have made my mistakes," Tom admitted. "I reckon it don't look exactly right fer me to be givin' too much good advice. But I'm goin' to foller my preachin' this time fer a fact. I'm sure goin' to salt this down."

And he did. Within a month Blake on his visits to Riggin purchased his tobacco at Tom's "seegar store," in a new twelve-by-twelve rickety wooden shack. Tom found ready to his hand a clientele of old-timers who sat on boxes, smoked and chewed tobacco, talked of the glories of the good old days and lamented the forward march of time. Tom heard all the news by word of mouth, nursed his rheumatism, cussed the rapacious dentists, and took it easy with a vengeance.

Blake refrained for obvious reasons to impart news of his happiness to Hank; but Hank was not long in learning of it. He had gone to work for Jim Taylor. They met in the road. Blake, despite all his resolution, could feel the hot blood mounting to his face as Hank stared at him cynically.

" 'Nother good man dead," Hank said.

Blake took up his ranching with the same dynamic energy with which he followed any line of endeavor in which his heart was engaged. He hired two good woodsmen and a carpenter and bought a team and wagon. Within three days the orderless jumble of shacks and cabins at the Harris place looked to have been smitten by a cyclone. They were torn piece from piece.

He remodeled the barn and built a new cabin in a more picturesque location—a beautiful cabin of hewn logs, plastered within, snugly ceiled and roofed, in a setting of bright evergreens with a green lawn shelving down to the creek.

He continued to attend Sunday school, and read lessons in immortality from a pair of dark eyes. His visits to the White home became more and more frequent, the trail skirting the foothills from the Harris ranch to White's, well worn.

The staid, conventional life he proposed to lead was a striking contrast to his past. No more gambling, no more wild riding. Cows as his stock in trade, a few to begin with, obeying the command of Nature to bring forth young in their season. Slow months, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter for growth, then an increased herd of females and the fattening and selling of the steers.

He had little capital. His start would be slow; but on this he did not let his mind dwell. Only one phase of the life was in his vision. As Hank observed, Blake was "sure knocked cuckoo when he could take it into his head to be a pillar in the church." Indeed, the wild Blake Moody was mad as a mad March hare.

The weeks sped quickly away. Summer was past, and Fall came in with an Indian Summer haze that made dream mountains out of distant ranges. Green birches, willows, cottonwoods, and aspens along the lower creeks, frost-touched, blazed in crimson and gold.

Blake labored as never before. He kept a hired man always, partly for help, largely because he could not bear the loneliness of "batching." Tom Harris' staggering fences were pulled down. Strong posts were deeply, rigidly set and slack wires restretched. The rail fences and stockades of the corrals were rebuilt.

Blake sang as he worked, some unprintable cowboy ballads, but, in the main those songs that Betty White and Jane Compton played. At last he surveyed his handiwork and his critical eyes told him it was good.

It was mid-morning of a day that threatened rain. Rank after rank of thin clouds with silver corrugations marched across the sky. There was a strange breathless hush in the air. The Seven Devils were dim with an impalpable haze and even Minidoka was indistinct. Blake felt strangely restless. He saddled his horse.

"I want to see McAlister about them heifers," he told Jack Day, the hired hand. "You can go on with that pasture fence, if it don't rain you out. I'll be back early."

As he rode toward Skull Creek the thin clouds became denser. Up over the Seven Devils came a tumbling black mass, huge as a million Zeppelins rolled into one. Pushed by a strong wind and heavily freighted, it came staggering along its aerial roadway.

Blake raced with the storm for McAlister's ranch. The first huge drops were falling as he tied his horse in the stable and ran into the house.

While he stood by the hearth safe and dry without a foreboding of evil, the black cloud went before the wind like a rudderless, storm-driven ship and struck on the apical cliffs of Minidoka. It broke and dropped a hundred million tons of water into the shed of Clear Creek.

A black torrent, a hurtling wall, thundering down the gorge, pushing huge boulders and logs like marbles and straws.

McAlister was not at home, and as soon as the storm was past, Blake started back. The trail was spongy and slippery and pools of water stood in all the hollows.

It was when he reached Clear Creek that boding of the evil that had fallen first came upon him. The rush of the torrent had passed, sweeping away bordering trees, piling great masses of wreckage along the banks. The stream was still a rumbling spate, rushing bank full, red under the bright sun.

Nibs feared to enter the water, rearing back snorting from the margin; and Blake, trusting his instinct implicitly, did not urge him. He followed the right-hand bank toward the ranch.

While still three miles below he met Jack Day. He was coatless, hatless and drenched as though he had been plunged into a lake.

"There's sure been —— a-poppin', Blake," Day said. "I was cookin' dinner when the rain commenced. D'rectly I heered it comin', like an express train it was, roarin' over a trestle. I legged it fer high land without stoppin' fer hat or coat. Wasn't none too soon, neither. An' how it did rain! It come down in bucketfuls.

"You ain't got any ranch left, Blake. It sure is —— after all the work we done. It took cabin, barns, corrals—ever'thing; an' it piled boulders forty foot high in places, an' logs all tangled up like toothpicks. It makes a man sick to see it."

BLAKE had no desire to see it. He had seen the work of cloudbursts. He knew the devastation they wrought. His ranch had lain in the path of one. Nature after building with studied care through the centuries the alluvial delta at the canyon mouth, rooting it with trees, carpeting it with grass, had defaced it at one stroke, like a peevish child at play. Blake had been an ant unwarily trafficking on the scene of play. The inexorable storm had worked him bane.

"Well, Jack," he said, "glad it didn't come in the night and catch us asleep. Lucky you got out as it was. Let's see, I owe you for these last two weeks. Might as well settle up. I ain't canning you, understand." The grin he summoned was wan. "But when all the work is done, we're through."

"No!" Day protested as Blake proffered the money. "You've lost it all. I can afford two week's work. When you start in ag'in, let me know. I like to work for you. Hope you're luckier next time."

Blake watched him go splashing down the trail. The creek had fallen sensibly. He waited half an hour, then Nibs was willing to take the ford.

XIV

ACROSS the creek, he thrust his hands into his chaps pockets and turned his horse loose. Nibs, wise horse, took the trail he had traveled so often of late at a swift running walk.

Blake's brain felt numb. The catastrophe on him had not the saddening effect as on one who had put many of his best years into the accumulation of a property to have it wiped out in a breath by fire or flood. After all, Blake hadn't had much in the ranch. It had cost him only a trifle, when all was said—some dollars won quickly by chance and skill, a few weeks of diverting labor. He wasn't sorrowful.

But his plans were wrecked. Like a courageous airman who had undertaken to fly at one swoop from side to side of a wide continent, he stood afoot, unhurt, soon after the beginning of his flight beside a shattered plane. The way before him was long and tedious. It was much nearer to where he had taken off.

Halfway along the trail he met Hank on a sweating cayuse riding hard toward his place.

"Blake," he began excitedly, "I want you to help me. Just come down from Riggin. Sheriff Lamb pulled out with a posse awhile ago after a gang uh rustlers. Dangdest steal you ever heard of! Somebody's cleaned out Israel Brown's Perchuns—ever' hoof, slick as a ribbon, an' maybe a few cayuses throwed in.

"Nobody knows where they went. Israel went west, lookin' for tracks. Fat chance he'll have pickin' up a trail after this rain. I think Lamb went east around the range. I don't know where the colts went, but I know how to beat Lamb to Hitchcock's Basin with five hours the start of me. They's two-fifty a piece for us if we git the horses—that's a hard winter's work. Are you on?"

"Might as well," Blake said. "I ain't got any ranch to bother me now. That rain rubbed it out—just like that." He swept his arm in an eloquent gesture.

"Oh, the dickens!" Hank said sympathetically. "I knowed they was a cloudburst, but, somehow, I never seem to think of you as a rancher. That it might hit you, never entered my bean. If I'd thought, I'd uh flagged my heels up there with a shovel an' dug a canal to lead the water around your meadow an' a lake to ketch the deebris. So it cleaned you out!"

Blake grinned.

"Well, I ain't a rancher now. But, by golly, it's kind of tough, at that. The way I've been driving nails and steeples and making the chips fly the last few weeks is a sin. Look at the callouses on my hands." He held up his palms.

"And the rainstorm comes along— Puff! An' there goes all the chips off your logs, an' all you've been buyin' with your poker an' blackjack chips to boot, an' prizes for ridin', bulldoggin' an' ropin' throwed along with the rest. Oh, well, come easy, go easy, as the sheepherder says. That worked six months for a Winter's stake an' blowed it in in twenty nine minutes. But whisperin' rattlesnakes! Here we are talkin' about busted clouds an' gutted ranches with Brown's colts gittin' farther away ever' minute.

"I got to go to Taylor's for Ol' Deuteronomy. Wouldn't try to chase a sheep on this eight hundred pounds uh jelly. Meet you at the mouth uh Blue Canyon in one hour an' a half." He was gone with lashing quirt.

Blake thanked Hank from his heart for the promised ride. It gave him an immediate purpose, promised some fervent action for a day or two from whence he hoped to gain the inspiration that would enable him to form some plans.

BETTY, when he arrived at White's, was in the yard, wearing a pair of muddy gloves, transferring with a small spade Summer plants from outdoor beds to pots. She met him smiling and, though he strove to appear natural, her smile passed as she looked closely at his face.

"Why, Blake, you look as if you'd lost our last friend."

"But I haven't though, have I? You still love me."

"Did you think I didn't?"

"Betty," he said, seating himself on the cobblestone wall of a flower bed, "do you know what that cloudburst has done? It has washed our ranch into Snake River—that is, I suppose it's to the Snake by this time if it kept up the speed it started with."

"Are you joking?" Her face was tragic.

"I never felt so little like cracking jokes in my life."

"Oh, well"—she smiled bravely—"what does a ranch amount to? There are lots of others."

"You're all right, little girl," he said with a sudden uprush of feeling. "You're all right. You'd put life into a wooden man. That old rainstorm can't keep us down. We'll do it again—and just as dog-gone quick as before. I'm going out right now and grab off two-fifty toward another one."

Some of the color left her face. She touched her tongue to her lips.

"Blake," she said earnestly, coming close to him. "I don't want you to get it quickly. I—I— Blake, neither Mother nor Father knows where you got all that money. They take it for granted you brought it here, savings—all except the prizes you won at Maverick, which, of course, are all right. But I heard—naturally, because everybody beside them, it seems, know it.

"I could forgive that. It was before—before— But I don't want you to get any more that way. I'd much rather you'd—well, earn it. I know you are good, Blake. I know Daddy hasn't made any mistake in his high opinion of you."

He was looking down as she was speaking, rolling a spur rowell abstractedly with his boot toe.

"I mean to earn it. But if anybody thinks I'm going to drag along for years saving a fortune from stray nickles and dimes—well, I can't, that's all. I aint cut out that way. I don't know how I'm going to earn our next start. My head hasn't started working since Jack Day told me what the rain had done. But that start had got to come fast. I'm not playing cards for this two-fifty. I'm going to help Hank Fairless run down a horse thief or two that walked off with Brown's horses. That'll be earning it—doing the world a good turn."

He saw horror dawn in her face.

"No! No! That's worse yet! Guns—shooting, maybe! I don't want you to, Blake."

Always accustomed to make decisions for himself, he had not given a thought to the possibility of opposition from her.

"Why," he said surprized, "it's good work to get a horse thief—if you can. And it ain't often you can."

"Yes. But there are officers hired to get them."

"I guess that's so. Maybe that's the right way to look at it. I'll think it over. Maybe next time, if they ain't my horses, I can see my way clear to stay out, reward or no reward. But I've got to go this time—promised Hank I would. Besides, Betty, I want to go. It would do me good to get shot at. Might start the wheels turning in my head again."

"You say you want to go. And you promised Hank Fairless." Her face had grown strained and utterly white. "Sometimes I can't understand you at all, Blake. You— Can't you just help being wild?"

Looking at her, near as she stood, it seemed that she had drawn far away, that a great gulf suddenly riven by an invisible force yawned between them.

"Wild? Oh, Betty, what's the use? I never gave a thought as to whether I was wild or tame. I never tried to make myself over for you. I was just myself. You seemed to like me that way. Maybe it was because you didn't know me. Anyhow, I've got to get away and think. That rain simply raised —— with me. Three hours ago I would have told the world I was a rancher. Now, I ain't got any more business than an Australian bushman." He rose slowly to his feet.

"Please don't swear like that. So you are going?"

"Yes. Promised Hank I would. He's after his horse now."

"Do you realize that in going you are making a choice between my earnest wishes and—and doing what Hank Fairless wants you to?"

"I don't think so. It ain't because I've got no regard for your wishes. But—well, if you want to put it that way let it go. For the last couple months I've been dreaming about dragging in the world and piling it at your feet. That looks like a wild dream now. If I don't do some tall thinking and get into action, I've got nothing, not a thing, for you. Except my hands. And heart."

He waited for her to speak, but she was silent, her eyes upon the ground, the same strained expression in her face.

"I've got to meet Hank and be on the way— Guess our doll house is flat, Betty. But it was pretty before the wind blew it down. Will you say good-by?"

She raised her eyes with pain in them and reproach, but did not speak.

He turned on his heel, went through the gate and swung into the saddle. The big bay had started to move away.

"Blake!" The cry wrenched from her throat literally turned him in the saddle. The ice in her face had melted. She ran toward him.

"I can't bear to have you go like that! You'll be careful, won't you? Promise me you will!"

"I will," he said unsteadily, his own sternness turning to water, "as careful as I can. And Betty— Oh, we'll talk it over when I get back. I tell you, I can't think. I know you're mine, that's all I know, now. I wish we was living ten thousand years ago, when a fighting man didn't need a ranch and was entitled to all he could take and hold. I'd just lift you up behind me on old Nibs and ride away."

"D-don't worry about the ranch, Blake. Your—your hands and h-heart are enough."

XV

THE two riders entered the canyon and were immediately in shadow. They had daylight with the sun behind the canyon wall for two hours. Night was upon them as they zigzagged upward from the little circular valley. A half moon, early-risen, shed a pale deceptive light.

They rode single file, Hank leading the way. Their talk was little, Blake barely grunting in reply to his companion's occasional sallies as the horses rested. Hank was in a prodigious hurry, pushing forward with all possible speed—which was little—as though life itself was the issue.

"Question of when they started and how good they know the country," he said. "Them colts will do pore travelin' after the first few hours. The rain'll wipe out all the tracks they made up till after the storm. I want a look at the Basin before daylight tomorrow."

They reached in their assent the broken deer trail, and Hank without pausing turned up the canyon. Blake stopped his panting horse. Below him unseen rumbled the rushing stream. Above in a rain-cleared sky, very near and bright, hung the moon. Night and solitude, and silence except for the diminishing hoof-beats of Hank's horse and the never-ending cadence of the stream. The confusion in Blake's mind was changing into order. A thought shaped itself.

"I ought to have lived ten thousand years ago— Money— Money— Can't get along without it— And get it by hard work, and slow— Sin to gamble— She was raised to think different— They're right, at that——"

He heard a call, faint with distance, and rode onward. He met Hank coming back, the gray picking his way gingerly along the dangerous trail, loosing rocks at intervals that leaped down the precipices starting small avalanches that thundered to the bottom of the canyon far below. Fairless reined up snarling:

"Blake, you love-sick scum uh creation, what's eatin' you! Thought Nibs rolled into the canyon. Here you've lost us ten good minutes when we ain't got ten seconds to spare. You ——!" He became inarticulate with wrath.

On and on they went, the labor of the journey increased tenfold by the darkness. The moon rode swiftly across the narrow slit of the sky, and then they had only pale stars. Where they doubted the evidence of their own eyes, they trusted to the instinct of their horses.

The sure-footed, powerful beasts carried them through. The first light of day was clearing the eastern sky as they scrambled panting up the last almost vertical rise at the entrance of the basin.

The light grew rapidly as they rode toward the open. Above them towered the craggy peaks, giant pinnacles, now white, majestically beautiful with the first snow, but cold, cold. The whole great scene was silent as a primordial world. Sunlight blazed in splendor on the white heads. The basin was still in shadow.

They rode carefully, speaking in whispers, until through a rift in the firs the meadow opened before them. They saw a straggling herd of loose horses.

"There's the *caballos*," Blake said. "Wonder where the men are. We ain't got any time to spare."

"No. We've already spared too much. They've prob'ly lamped us before now."

As he spoke there came the echoing crash of a gun, then another, and another, repeating rifles fired rapidly. The shots were not from near at hand, but in the great ampitheater the echos beat back and forth and the silence was shattered into a tumult of sound.

As they looked at each other, startled, there came the rumble of galloping horses. They saw the loose herd breaking away in a panic. Guns in hand, they headed swiftly toward the edge of the timber. On reaching the open, one swift look revealed the situation.

Three horsemen were speeding toward the rim of the basin where the canyon opened at the north. To the south, far distant, four others stood on a low rise. Dim smoke rose over them as the guns barked. Above the thunder of running horses, they heard the bullets, relentless messengers of death, go whining across the valley.

"There's Jeff Jamison, or I'm a horned toad!" yelled Hank setting spurs to his gray. "Wish to —— I had a rifle!"

Just then they saw the rearmost of the fleeing horses go down in a terrible fall. Life smitten from him while in full career, the animal was transformed into an inert mass of flesh bearing all the momentum of flight. It crumpled, touched nose and rolled. The rider was hurled heels over head. The other two without pausing swept on and were soon out of sight.

As Blake and Hank galloped in pursuit, the fallen man rose slowly dazedly to his feet and like one in a dream searched for and found his hat. It was Rob White!

Hank went by him without slackening pace, bent on preventing the escape of the others. He held his revolver in readiness and rode with all his skill, urging the gray to the top of its speed.

The sheriff's party had ceased firing and on tired horses were galloping into the basin.

Abreast of Rob, Blake reined up, and Nibs, inimitable cow horse, broke his headlong career in two short leaps.

"Get on!" Blake commanded, freeing a stirrup Rob sprang up behind him. The big horse, running powerfully under his double burden, rushed straight at the basin rim.

Then the guns behind them opened up again. A bullet shrieked past, so near that they could feel its breath. White shrank instinctively far to one side.

"Sit still!" Blake roared. "You'll have this horse down!"

"Ain't that Lamb the —— shot!" Rob's affectation of nonchalance was gone utterly. He was almost weeping. "He's a half mile away if he's an inch. When he unlimbers that old 32-40 he can shoot at you today and kill you tomorrow!"

During a few seconds while bullets droned around them like hornets, they were in view of the posse; then Nibs with the long leaps of a cougar was plunging down a sharp incline into a timbered canyon mouth.

A half dozen loose horses were running wildly before them, and Nibs was overhauling them.

"Any of them broke?" Blake demanded.

"That old p-p-pinto of Brown's is," Rob chattered.

Eight seconds later Blake had a loop over her shaggy head and had brought her up strangling. He leaped to the ground, attacking like a beast of prey, while wise old Nibs kept tight the choking noose. He seized her ears and twisting them cruelly threw all his weight upon her head.

"Bring my saddle!"

He seized the tip of an ear in his teeth and bore her head almost to the ground, holding her helpless. Rob ran with the saddle and cinched it upon her back. They worked like relay riders racing against time. In the beginning of a minute the mare was running free. Before the end of the sixty second interval she was saddled, with a swimming halter made from Blake's riata on her head, and Blake was in the saddle.

She bucked five jumps, then raised her head and ran. Rob followed on Nibs bareback.

They overtook Hank a few moments later where the canyon broke into two prongs. He was wildly angry.

"Watchu think you're pullin' off!" he roared. "If we're goin' to stop 'em, we've got to show speed an' system. Wish Lamb'd git here!"

"I don't!" said Rob. "I'm going."

"Not on my horse," Blake said.

"Oh, ——!" Hank exploded. "Fine help you are! Le's git action. I think they went down this right hand prong."

They galloped for half a mile and came to where the flinty canyon bed held not a trace of any fugitive. Hank circled like an eager hound.

"Let's go," Rob said desperately. "I don't want to see Lamb—not ever again."

"What are we goin' to do with Rob, anyhow?" Hank asked, as though he had just noted the boy's presence.

"We don't want him, do we?"

"No. But after what I seen up there in the basin, I sure want to git the deadwood on a pair uh Jamisons. That was Jeff an' Pete, wasn't it?" He demanded of Rob.

"Yes. And Jeff saw my horse go down. I saw him turn his head when the bullet smashed. They run off and left me."

"Sure they would. Save their own hides—to thunder with your'n."

"Let's go," Rob said, looking fearfully up the canyon.

"Yes, let's go," Blake agreed. "We're killing time." He started at a quick trot.

"What's the big idea!" Hank protested. "I want a pair uh Jamisons, an' I want 'em bad."

"Might as well look for a pair of needles in a stack of hay. They've got the world to hide in, and fresh horses to ride. You don't want to take Rob back to Lamb, do you?"

"No. But what's that got to do with slammin' the hooks into Jeff Jamison?"

"Quite a bit to do with it. The posse seen me ride off with the man they'd downed and emptied a dozen cannons at me. They could tell my horse as far as they could see him. I figure we might have a hard time explaining things. We ain't got a chance in a million of getting a Jamison."

"Don't try to kid *me*," Hank said. "We can prove our reasons for bein' here, easy." He was following Blake reluctantly. Young White was leading out rapidly.

"Maybe we could—if we turned Rob in. But he ain't going to show up in this mess. I didn't have an idea in the world of finding him in this kind of a layout. Looks —— bad. But this will cure him. He'll be a good dog from here on out."

Hank whistled softly. They had altogether lost the trail of the other rustlers who on fresh horses were doubtless making far better time than they could hope to achieve. They left the canyon, climbed a steep tributary gulch and entered a secluded hollow. Their horses were very tired.

"We can let the horses eat here," Blake said, "and watch for Lamb from that ridge up there."

"This is sure a nice mess!" Hank said bitterly. He had come to a full realization of the radical change in their status. "We've turned this into a fine layout! See what I told you! Them little times lost stallin' in the canyon last night done for us. Three minutes earlier an' I'd uh been in range uh that sneakin' Jeff Jamison. Ol' Deuteronomy had one good half mile left in him. That lanky string uh jerked sheep carion ain't got judgment enough to steal a horse that can make Deuteronomy eat dust for half a mile.

"I don't git you a-tall." He had grown more calm. "What're you figgerin' on doin'? Just let Lamb think you was in with 'em an' let it go at that? Lamb'll figger he's got enough evidence to send us to the pen, actin' this way. I ain't with you there. I might steal the pennies out of a blind beggar's hat an' grab candy away from a kid, but I ain't no —— horse thief!"

"I'll just let him figger awhile," Blake said. "It's this way— Rob is caught red-handed. He deserves the pen. Ain't that right, Rob?"

Rob was silent. He lowered his eyes in shame and dug in the ground with his toe.

"But," Blake went on, "I believe a judge would hand him the lightest possible sentence—that'd be two years. He'd throw the book at the Jamisons if he had 'em; but he'd be lenient as he could with Rob, considerin' his family an' the fact he ain't done anything very bad before. But two years in the pen makes a man an ex-convict for life. Looks to me like Rob has had his lesson. I'm willing, since it's sort of up to us, to be more lenient than the judge.

"How about it, Rob? Think you can show some respect for yourself—and your folks—and go straight?"

"God knows I can," the boy said fervently. "If I get out of this, never again. I—I don't know why I went in. By gosh, I don't know! I owed Jeff a little money. I always had a deuce of a time savin' up enough to pay him. He had treated me pretty good. Once in Grangeville he paid a fine for me and got me out of the coop. I payed that back. I offered to work for him, and he sprung this deal on me. It looked awful easy—just shove the colts to the Montana line. I never did like old Is Brown. But I ain't got any excuse. I must have been stark, ravin' crazy. And think of them Jamisons running off and leavin' me!"

"That's what you get when you pick Jeff Jamisons for friends," Hank observed.

"All right, kid, you can have another chance." Blake spoke like a benevolent czar. "I believe you're worth it. If you've got any of you father's blood in you at all, I know you are. You can make a surcingle out of a piece of my rope and ride the pinto back to her range. When you get close to home, turn her loose and walk in. Keep out of sight till you get there, then there'll be no evidence unless you squawk. Brown can round up his horses. The Jamisons have probably skipped clean out of the country. Nobody's hurt—much."

XVI

CONVERSATION lagged as the three lay cold and hungry behind a clump of brush on a ridge, from whence they could keep an eye on all the approaches while the horses fed in the hollow.

As the day advanced, the sky grew lowering and overcast. After the first magnificent play of light on the snow peaks they had hardly seen the sun. A wind, sad-voiced, desolate, hinting of frost and ice and bleak winter, soughed through the trees. The clouds thickened imperceptibly and snow began to fall. Toes and fingers ached and grew numb where they lay.

Hank rose to his feet swearing violently.

"I'm the coldest horse thief that ever laid out behind a bush tryin' to see a cold-blooded sheriff a mile away through a snowstorm so thick I couldn't see a warm four-story saloon fifty yards. Le's git under a tree. Let Lamb sneak up on me if he wants his left eye blacked good an' plenty!"

They found a fir with dense branches sloping from trunk earthward. In this primitive shelter they brushed the snow from their clothing and stamped and swung their arms.

"Blake, if I was you," said Hank through chattering teeth, "I'd fergit about the new moon over my right shoulder spellin' good luck. Judgin' from your dee-falcations sence we hit this neck uh the woods, I'd say you're about the unluckiest *hombre* that ever came down the pike. You got kicked an' jailed. You got into a couple lucky games an' won a saddle an' some jack at the show. Then along comes the water-spout—an' all you've got left of the whole kiboodle is the saddle. An' to top it all off beautiful, you go to sleep in Blue Canyon an' we miss gittin' in range uh two uh my worst horse thief friends by six inches.

"I've seen *hombres* that didn't know they is any moon win big at cards. I bel'eve you could still ride an' throw a rope if somebody was to hang a curtain over the moon. Don't talk to me about luck no more!"

"The trouble with you, Hank, is you're too much like a lot of others—you've got a Poland China's idea of luck. Getting hold of something good, like money, and hanging onto it like a leech to a drownded nigger—that ain't luck.

"I've had all the luck in the world since we hit this section. I had the fun of drawing full houses in poker and naturals in blackjack, and walking out loaded down with *dinero*. I had the crowd at Maverick howling my name for three days till they was hoarse. And even when the mare stepped on me, instead of packing me some place else, you took me where there was a piano and—and a family of fine folks. I had a barrel of fun spending that money, besides helping poor old Tom Harris out.

"Luck! What do you call luck? When you go to a show all you expect is a good time, ain't it? You don't figger on walking off with the gate receipts."

Hank shook his head hopelessly, set his knocking teeth and swung his arms harder.

"But it takes real two-o'clock-in-the-morning kind of guts for a man to believe there's anything worth going after in life when he's as cold as I am. I'll admit that," Blake added.

"You said it!" Hank agreed savagely. "Le's git out uh these mountains before we're snowed in. What'd I care if we meet the whole state militia!"

They saddled the horses, Blake smoothing with inordinate care the Navaho blanket on Nibs' back. Rob, chastened, shamed and miserable, cut Blake's riata and cinched a surcingle on the pinto to cling to in case she bucked.

"Turn her loose when you get close to

home and walk in," Blake repeated to Rob, "And the next time you drive any horses, be sure they're your own or you've got the owner's permission. Now, *adios* and good luck."

"Ain't you—ain't you going, too?"

"If I do, I've got a hunch Lamb will come looking for me, and I'll have to kick in with all I know to save my own hide. So I'm going to Argentina, starting right now, *pronto*."

Rob's face was aghast.

"You—you needn't think I'm that caliber, Blake, to let you ride out of the country packing the blame that belongs to me—not after you've tried to skelp. I'm no —— Jamison. You go on back. I'll take my medicine."

"That's white man's talk," Blake commended, "but you're not the only one to think of. You couldn't swallow all the medicine if you tried. Your folks would get the biggest share. No. The way I've said is best. If Hank wants to go back, maybe he can prove an alibi without dragging anybody else in."

Hank had brightened wonderfully.

"I guess not go back! Ol' Argentine looks good to me, too. I think, maybe, Jeff Jamison's run that way. If I can ever git one good whack at that disgrace uh humanity without nobody havin' a death grip on my shirt collar, he'll think a band uh stampedin' long horns is walkin' on his face.

"I didn't know what Blake had in that keen brain uh his'n or I wouldn't uh done all this worryin'. His ol' head is workin' true to form, that's a sagebrush cinch. If he was to stay around here another two months, Blake'd be married, sure as squawfish can't walk, sewed up dead to rights."

"Married!" cried Rob indignantly. "Ain't that all right! I'm tellin' you, Hank Fairless, you'd better not be saying my sister——!"

"Cut it out, you two!" Blake growled.

Rob drew Blake aside.

"This is plain ——," he said miserably. "What'll I tell Betty?"

"Maybe you're taking too much for granted in thinking she ain't got wiser ideas about this than you."

"I know her better than you do. She's serious about things. She'll never forgive me."

"It's a good thing I have to go," Blake said. "I know that. Thought about it all the way up Blue Canyon. If I could, without raising seven degrees of old Nick, of course I'd go back. It may look funny for me to run away, but not near as funny as you would look in steel bracelets.

"But don't feel sore at yourself about that. Hank said once I'm not in her class. He may be right. Anyhow, I doubt if I'm the stuff good husbands are made of—too curious about what the world looks like from the top of the next ridge. But the worst is, where yesterday I had a neat little stake from gambling, today I'm broke. She wouldn't let me gamble any more, and ten to one I'd never make anything at it if I did. I never was very lucky at poker before.

"I won't have her face the years of poverty. I've seen too many fellows try to head a family when they couldn't make a living for themselves. I've seen too much of it. She's a mighty fine girl, and she's worth ten times more than I can give. I can do her more good by going than staying, in more ways than one.

"Now be good to yourself, Rob. If I ever hit this country again, I'm expecting to find you a decent citizen."

Blake and Hank rode eastward.

"Bur-r-r-r," Blake shivered. "I ain't got on half enough clothes. If a man gets snowed on once, that's probably the fault of the weather. If he gets snowed on twice, he's got no one to blame but himself. Hank, I'm headed for the yucca country as fast as old Nibs can travel."

They had ridden in silence for miles. Hank suddenly reined up his horse.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed jubilantly. "I've think it out. You was right, that's a sagebrush cinch. Lucky moons—I'll tell the cock-eyed world! This last one was Rob's an' Betty's. You pulled Rob back on his feet just as he was hittin' the skids. That's lucky for him, not to mention his folks. Now you're headin' for South America. That's lucky for Betty White, whether she believes it or not. Also lucky for you—saves you from a life-term uh matrimony at hard labor.

"You're right. They's luck in the moon if you git on the right side of it. An' not only for you, but for ever'body around you. I'm with you now, cowboy; so keep right on a-lookin' for it down the ol' right shoulder."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by **Berton Braley**

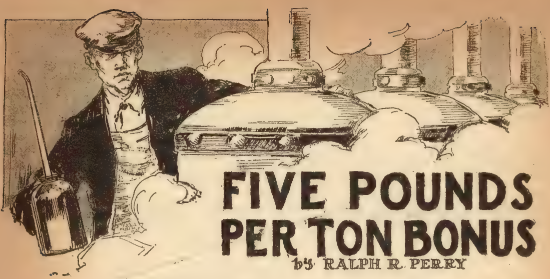
REGINALD, Algernon, Archie and Percy
  Wandered along down the street.
Bill, Jake and Peter and Hank chuckled, "Mercy!
  Ain't they too perfectly sweet?"
"Rabble like these are a blight and a curse,"
Said Reggie and Algy to Archie and Perce.

Jakey hit Percy and Peter hit Archie,
  Bill picked out Reggie for his,
Hank jumped on Algy and crumpled his starchy
  Collar all over his phiz.
"It seems we must fight, though to rows we're averse,"
Said Algy to Reggie and Archie to Perce.

Now back of a monocle often there dances
  A sportive and dangerous zest;
And under a boutonnière sometimes it chances
  There's hidden a fifty-inch chest.
And presently things went exceedingly ill
For Peter and Henry and Jakey and Bill.

A cop came along as the battle was finished
  And, after some gazing around,
Discovered, their pride and their swagger diminished,
  Pete, Jake, Hank and Bill on the ground.
"Yer names?" the cop queried in manner most terse
Of Algy and Archie and Reggie and Perce.

Then "Reginald Dooley" and "Archibald Hooley"
  And "Algernon Kelly" said they,
"And mine," said the other, "is Percy Gilhooley!"
  Pete, Jake, Hank and Bill swooned away.
And on up the street, for their scrap none the worse,
Went Algy and Archie and Reggie and Perce!



FIVE POUNDS PER TON BONUS

by RALPH R. PERRY

Author of "The Proving of Old Man Lindquist," "Stowed Away," etc.

HOT? Decades in a ship's engine room had inured Chief Angus MacDermut to ordinary heat, but the vertical sun of a Mesopotamian August had driven him away from his harbor tuning-up of the *Sedalia's* engines and sent him panting to the scanty shade the bridge cast on the forward well-deck. He sat on a camp stool in his dungarees and undershirt, perspiration standing in globules on his bald head and running down the hollow of his chest, and cursed the sun that sent the dancing heat waves rising as though the *Sedalia's* deck was the lid of Tophet, cursed Mesopotamia, the Shat-el-Arab River, where the ship lay, and the port of Basra ten miles up-stream, whence, eventually, a cargo would come.

It was a thorough and workmanlike piece of profanity. It made the engineer feel better; with the result that when the skipper popped over the rail, his homely face glowing with enthusiasm, and slapped MacDermut heartily on the back, the Scot only grinned.

"Aweel, Captain Prescott, I'm thinkin' ye've got a cargo," MacDermut chuckled.

With arms akimbo "Long Andy" Prescott grinned down at the little engineer. Then of a sudden every sign of humor was erased from his face save the twinkle in his light gray eyes.

"Mac," the great American public is clamoring for dates," he declared solemnly.

"Aye, na dout," MacDermut grunted, visibly unimpressed. "Though I didna hear them when we left New York. An' gi'n they're clamoring, why should that set ye dancin' like a monkey on a stick in this ash-pit o' a country?"

"Mac, you don't understand me. The American public is *clamoring* for dates," Prescott insisted. "And they ain't got any. The dates they're clamoring for—four thousand tons of them—are here at Basra."

"An' the *Sedalia* carries them home. Ye're inferrin' we've a cargo. Is that all your excuse for tryin' to knock a mon off his chair?"

Prescott shook his head. His eyes were still dancing, but his tone was deadly serious.

"No, Mac, the American public really must be clamoring," he explained. "Because—being a Scotchman, you better take a good grip on that chair—because on the understanding that we make an extra quick passage the shipping agent has offered us a bonus of five pounds sterling per ton. Five pounds is twenty-five dollars, and there are four thousand tons, Mac. One hundred thousand—and the freight."

"Losh!" murmured the engineer.

He pulled out a blue bandanna and slowly wiped his bald head while a smile mirrored his delight at this colossal windfall. Then, by degrees, his expression became gloomy. Even in the first flush of enthusiasm MacDermut realized that it would be he, the chief engineer, and not the skipper who would have to earn that bonus.

"An' how fast a passage did ye promise, Captain Prescott," he asked quietly.

"We must dock in New York October fifteenth, Mac. I figured out the run in the agent's office. It means we must average twelve and one-half knots all the way. You've turned the *Sedalia* up as fast as that."

"Losh!" repeated MacDermut very thoughtfully. "As ye say, we've logged as much as that—for a half-day, an' then a week to rest the firemen and ease the engines. But this run is a quarter way round the world, Captain. Ye know our standard speed is eleven knots. Fifty-six revolutions per minute; an' ye're askin' for twelve and a half, and sixty-five."

MacDermut shook his head, frowning.

"Still, five pounds per ton," he went on, and drummed on his knee with his fingers. "Ye'll get the owners to give me a two weeks' overhaul in New York? Yer engines are liable to be scrap," he asked plaintively.

"You can do it, Mac," the captain encouraged.

"Do it? Of course we can do it!" growled MacDermut. "Drive, drive, drive for weeks on end; swill the bearin's wi' oil and trust she'll stand it. Steam an' steel will stand lots o' abuse. It's the men I'm worryin' for. It's like asking yer watch offices to steam six thousand miles in nothing but thick fog, Captain! That's what forced draught means to the black gang. An' summer, too. She'll be a hot ship below," grimly prophesied MacDermut.

SLINGLOADS of dates in square wooden cases about eighteen inches by twelve began to swing over the *Sedalia's* rail that afternoon, and Andy Prescott and his mates drove the stevedores with oaths and *backsheesh* at a pace that left MacDermut with all too little time for preparation. The engines were as ready as skill and painstaking care could make them, but two days earlier a hook on a chain hoist had slipped and a falling cylinder head had sent the third engineer and the oiler helping him on the job into the hospital.

In addition, more firemen had to be signed on, and good sailors on the beach are scarce at Basra. MacDermut combed every consul's office and café in the sun-baked town. He returned aboard with a sour face. For oiler and firemen he could obtain nothing but Arabs. The only engineer had produced a French ticket, though he gave his name as Bourchard.

His squat, broad-shouldered figure and the black beard which clung to his face in a tightly curled mat like Astrachan lamb's wool convinced MacDermut of his nationality, though it made him suspect the worst of Bourchard's professional skill.

Prescott had warned his engineer not to pick a foreigner, and even protested strenuously before he consented to sign the man on; but as MacDermut pointed out, it was a case of Bourchard or no one. Time pressed, for Prescott had decided to put to sea only partially loaded.

There are only nineteen feet of water over the bar which lies well off the mouth of the combined Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and as soon as the *Sedalia* was loaded to that draft Prescott clapped on the hatches and put to sea. He might have gotten five hundred additional tons of dates if he had dared to anchor off the bar until they could be lightered out; but, as he explained to MacDermut, there was too much at stake, even more than a hundred-thousand-dollar bonus. In the last days ashore gossip had been busy with his ship and cargo. On the efficiency of MacDermut's engines rested the reputation of American shipping in that quarter of the world.

Ever since the war the dates had gone out in German bottoms. Even now a new, oil-burning Bremen-built freighter, rated in Lloyd's as making thirteen knots, lay anchored in the stream, empty, for the cargo for which she had called was under the *Sedalia's* hatches. The American concern to which the dates were consigned had suddenly decided to support its own national merchant marine; but if the *Sedalia* were late, and the American public began to clamor for dates too loudly, no one could hope that next year patriotism would stand again in the way of business.

All this Prescott confided to MacDermut while the *Sedalia* was pointing her nose down-stream.

"I nearly had to take a swing at that Dutchman, too," he reflected. "Sore? Mac, he was fit to be tied! I know if I'd 'a' understood German I'd 'a' had to hang one on his ear. What he said in English was bad enough. Why, he called the *Sedalia* a lump of rust and coal dust that would fall apart before we got to Suez. My ship, Mac! He said he'd follow and trans-ship the cargo when our propellers dropped off—you can see how mad he was.

"Of course, the loser's got a right to rave," Prescott continued slowly. "For two days he stalked around town sour and gloomy as a sailor ashore when all the bars are closed. I don't mind that. Rather enjoyed it; but on the third day he seemed to get over the shock a bit. When I met him he just grinned at me in a nasty way, and laughed, sarcastic, as if the joke was on me. You know, MacDermut, it's fair wonderful how offensive a fat red-headed Dutchman gets when he puts his mind on it."

"The whole black gang was ashore the second night," MacDermut ruminated. "That Heinie might have been thinking how he'd bribed one of them to throw emery into the main bearings."

"I'll bash in the man's head that tries it," Prescott promised, his lean jaw setting ominously.

For a moment he turned the thought over in his mind. Far dirtier tricks have been done before in the shipping game with a big charter at stake. At length Prescott's Yankee features cleared; he even grinned.

"Well, happy days, MacDermut. Any dirty work will be in the black gang, anyhow, so it's up to you. Hop to it, Chief."

Through torrid days when men fainted in the engine room from the sheer, breathless heat, days when the stokehold watches were shortened and the firemen drank two quarts of oatmeal water in every watch, through the Red Sea, Suez, Alexandria, and into the Mediterranean, where it was a little cooler, MacDermut hopped to it. Day and night he was in and out of the engine room. He blarneyed and cursed till his voice was so hoarse he could scarcely speak above a whisper. Hour after hour he prowled over his engines with a flash-light calling for the oiler here, making an adjustment there, getting spare parts ready for the minor accidents and breakdown which are almost inevitable when machinery is overdriven. With him worked Shane, Poulson and Bourchard, the engineers, and the reward of their labor showed in the trickle of steam which kept the *Sedalia's* safety valve popping, and a log which averaged 12.8 knots day after day.

Prescott rubbed his hands, claimed they'd sight Liberty by October twelfth at this rate, and greeted MacDermut with a hearty, "Good work, Mac," every morning. To this the little Scott would respond with a brief nod of his bald head. Even on deck his ear was cocked to catch the beat of his engines. So far he had done well, yet ahead of the *Sedalia* was still five thousand miles of blue water, and her engines were twenty-odd years old.

The first trouble came about five o'clock in the morning, in Dennis Shane's watch. The freckled, red-headed first engineer, who had been with the *Sedalia* nearly as long as MacDermut reported, anxiously that all through the engines the bearings were warm. Shane's first thought was to curse Selim, his Arab assistant, for using too little oil or for omitting his half-hourly round; but the Arab, his liquid brown eyes big and glassy, shook his head and stubbornly offered his half-empty oil can as proof of assiduousness—proof which Shane naturally brushed aside. Any one can waste oil.

Nevertheless, for most of his watch he was forced to slow down, and the three hours at reduced speed lowered the *Sedalia's* average to 12.2 knots for the twenty-four hours. In itself the few miles lost were nothing. The ship was slightly ahead of schedule, but Shane was irritable and MacDermut worried.

Ordinarily bearings get hot one at a time, hot enough to burn the engineer's fingers. One bearing will frequently start to melt out its babbitt while every other remains cool; but in this case all the bearings were warm. Still, ten revolutions above standard speed kept up day after day might be expected to have that effect eventually, and so MacDermut decided that the untrained Selim had gotten careless enough to slop the oil on the engine frames instead of shooting it properly into the bearing. Once the bearings were flushed, the trouble disappeared, which bore out this theory.

SPEED was maintained in Shane's watch that afternoon, but the following morning, at five A.M., the bearings got warm again. The *Sedalia* slowed down. The next afternoon, for the third time, in Shane's watch, it was necessary to cool bearings. Mac himself stood the engineer's watch that night while Shane went the rounds with the oiler. Everything was running perfectly at four, when Bourchard went off watch.

Shane saw the cups filled with oil, peered, listened, and tested bearings with the back of his hand, where the skin is thinner and more sensitive to heat. At five o'clock, with a wild Irish yell, he hurled his oil-sodden cap madly down onto the deck below, at MacDermut's feet.

"The bearin's are hot again," he shouted. "They're hot," he repeated in a falsetto, stamping on the grating, far too angry to swear.

MacDermut rubbed his chin with a clenched right fist and raised cold gray eyes.

"Then it's no an accident, Shane. Dirty money's been paid, and is bein' earned."

"Ye ain't accusin' me?"

Shane's voice cracked. He was so pale his freckles stood out like paint blotches on his checks; his lips began to lift away from his teeth as he gathered himself to jump down on the little Scotchman.

"Na, na," MacDermut denied testily, "I eentimated no such thing. Let me see your oil can, oiler," he snapped.

Wondering, the Arab produced the little can with the spout, and the big gallon container which was filled with oil from the tank at the start of each watch. MacDermut moved over to the bench and took out a square of fine cloth, placing it over the top of a clean bucket. Into this filter he poured the oil from the cans, examined their interiors minutely and settled down to wait. Shane was plainly puzzled by this action, and MacDermut explained.

"Ye'll hear strange tales whiles ye're sipping a dram o' liquor, Shane. I've studied more to run yon machines than wreck them, but there was a young lad at Antofagasta—fourth engineer on a liner, kicked off his ship he was, for cause I've na dout. He was bragging in the bar how he'd got square with the chief. A handful of ashes flung in the oil, he said, and the bearings'll get hot. I'm wondering. Emery or sand would have melted the friction metal, ye ken, and something's bein' done every day at the same time."

As he finished, MacDermut lifted up the square of cloth, holding it against the light. Shane peered closely over his shoulder, then each turned to the other and saw his disappointment reflected in the face opposite.

Except for a yellow oil stain, the cloth was perfectly clean.

"Your hunch was wrong, Chief," said Shane, so low that his sympathy was barely audible above the noise of the engines.

"I wonder?" said MacDermut.

He thrust his hands in the pockets of his dungarees and teetered back and forth on his heels for ten revolutions of the screw. Then without a word, he walked from the engine room and stayed in his room for ten hours. If it was going to be necessary to lift the bearings twice a day for the remainder of the voyage, the *Sedalia* would be paid no bonus.

MacDermut was desperate, and it must have been an unconscious grimness in his attitude when he reentered the engine room in the middle of Bourchard's watch which made the Frenchman hurry forward, nervously wiping his hands with a wad of waste. The beat of the engines informed MacDermut's trained ears that everything was going well, and he simply shrugged his shoulders at Bourchard's voluble assurances. Let M'sieur MacDermu' look at his log, let him——

"I've blamed ye for naething, Mr. Bourchard," MacDermut cut into the flow of talk irritably.

"Yus, nothing happens in our watch," boasted the oiler.

There was a nasty implication in the man's tone that angered MacDermut thoroughly, for he had never liked Greathitt. There is seldom love lost between a reserved Glasgow engineer and an impudent cockney oiler, and Greathitt's sallow face was always either smirking or fawning, both of which MacDermut detested. He had often wished Greathitt would leave the ship, but it was against the engineer's principles to haze any one, tired as he had become of seeing Greathitt's sleek black head and big ears moving around the engine room for the past two years.

"Bring me yer oil can," MacDermut growled, mostly to punish the oiler for his impudence.

Greathitt blinked with surprize, but he brought the big can without noticeable hesitation. MacDermut glanced into it idly, was handing back the can, when, on the surface where the oil touched the metal, he saw a fleck of scum.

"There's ashes in it, you thief!" he shouted.

"Don't hit me, sir!" Greathitt cringed back against the bulkhead. "I don't know nothing about no ashes, s'help me. I never put them there," he shrilled, frightened and vicious as a rat in a corner.

"Bourchard!" MacDermut snapped.

"I know nozzing," the bearded man denied, his big head wagging slowly.

His wandering eye fell on Greathitt, who had moved forward to face MacDermut as soon as the risk of a blow had passed.

"*Cochon.* Pig!" the Frenchman snarled.

Barely in time to stop his leap at the oiler's throat, MacDermut rammed his hand against Bourchard's chest.

"Not sae hasty," MacDermut countermanded. "'Tis easy to prove yer innocence by knocking a mon down, Bourchard. I'm na sae confident it wasna' yersel', ye know. 'Tis in cold blood we'll find out. Why, mon, Shane wud kill ye."

The answer was the red sheen that glared in Bourchard's eyes; the bristling of his beard. Both men were short. They stood breast to breast and eye to eye, neither quailing an inch. To Greathitt's whines and recriminations they were deaf. MacDermut's face had gone white; Bourchard's beard writhed as he chewed at his lips. Now, without turning his head, he spat aside on the deck.

"That is in your face," he whispered between his teeth.

In MacDermut's neck the muscles jerked into relief and relaxed.

"I'd like to kill ye," he panted, "but 'twud delay the ship. Go to yer cabin. Ye're relieved o' duty."

Bourchard shrugged and turned his back deliberately; while MacDermut, his chest heaving as he panted for breath in the heavy engine room air, slumped on to a stool.

"Mr. MacDermut, he—" Greathitt yammered.

"You, too. Git forward," the engineer snarled so fiercely that the oiler jumped, dodged behind the machinery, and ten seconds later had snatched up a jumper he had dropped near the throttle and disappeared up the ladder on the run.

Bourchard watched him go with a sneer, then followed slowly. At the foot of the ladder he paused and turned toward MacDermut.

"I have worked hard for you," he said.

It was a reproach and an apology, despite the defiant pride which still rang in his voice. He waited for a reply, but MacDermut did not move or speak. His feet slow and heavy on the iron ladder, Bourchard climbed upward out of sight.

IT WAS perhaps ten minutes later that Shane ran into the engine room.

"Bourchard called me and said you wanted me to go on duty. It's only two o'clock. What's the matter with him? What's wrong," he cried.

MacDermut was still sitting bowed on the camp stool, his head in his hands. He straightened his back wearily, lifting a face haggard with worry and fatigue, and explained in a dozen blunt sentences, while Shane paced up and down before him, grinding his heel savagely into the steel deck at every stride.

"The swine," he growled as MacDermut finished and rose to go.

"Aye, but it's well to ken it must be two o' them," MacDermut answered.

"Two? One, ye mean."

"Aye, one. But which? I'll be back, Shane. I'm tired. Seein' red tires ye."

"Which? That's no riddle," Shane called after the retreating engineer.

For some time the red-headed first officer was far too angry to take up the routine duties of his watch. He looked angrily at the steam gage, rather in the hope that steam would be low, for his mood craved the relief of storming into the fire room and hazing the stokers to their task. But the pressure was high, and while the Arab oiler went sulkily about his half-hourly rounds, keenly resentful because he had been driven to work hours too soon, Shane continued his pacing up and down, up and down, his mind busy with the schemes of violent punishment he itched to inflict on Bourchard—if MacDermut's plaguey sense of justice didn't interfere.

Six bells had just been struck when Shane halted, ejaculating a barking, ironical "Ha!" as a final expression of contempt at the whole mess. Next he began to stretch, but while his lean arms were extended far above his head he became conscious of the beat and clack of the engines for the first time since he came on watch. His arms dropped. He leaned forward, eyes half shut, his head on one side, listening intently. Again he glanced at the steam gage. It was still high, and his frown deepened. With the memory of the last engine trouble in mind he laid a hand on the nearest bearing. It was perfectly cool—and yet the *Sedalia* had slowed down. With steam enough to drive her at seventy revolutions, with the throttle wide open, and the engine functioning perfectly, she was making less than twelve knots. Again Shane listened, counting the revolutions. The cadence was just over a second. As near as he could judge, fifty-five odd turns to the minute.

Shane's indrawn breath hissed between his teeth as his figure stiffened with a decision suddenly made. Knowing that his efforts would be fruitless, he swiftly tested the oil, inspected the steam lines and verified the steam pressure by a hurried trip to the fire room. There was nothing wrong. Once more the ship's speed was being checked by sly, deliberate sabotage, and Shane was of no mind to waste time in a laborious effort to discover the cause by the exercise of professional skill. There was another remedy; speedier, more direct and more permanent.

Thoughtfully his eye roved over the engines and came to rest on the high-pressure cylinder and the thick steam pipe that curved from it toward the boilers, through which the hot steam was led to the engines. From the tool-rack he picked up an eight-inch spanner and stuck it into his hip pocket; then picked up a bar and walked swiftly up to the steam pipe, where he laid the tool carefully on the grating. With a jerk of his head, he summoned the Arab oiler, Selim.

"I go out. You watch," he ordered.

On second thought he picked a double handful of waste out of the can and twisted a sweat rag around it to make a triangular bandage with a roll of wadding in its center about as thick as his wrist. After leaving the engine room he walked quietly to his own quarters, where he fumbled in the drawer under his berth till he found a rusty pair of handcuffs. He tested the locks with a grin, then tiptoed into the corridor.

The night was hot. All the sleeping men had hooked back their doors, so that Shane had only to push aside the green curtain that hung across the door opposite his. One stride brought him to the bunk. Holding the handcuffs ready in his right hand, he threw aside the sheet that covered the sleeper with his left, and leaped upon the man, pinioning his arms beneath his knees. There came the thump of struggling bodies against the partition, a click as the handcuffs snapped fast, a French oath that was smothered half-spoken. Shane knotted the gag at the back of Bourchard's neck with a violent jerk and touched his back lightly with the spanner.

"Git up before I blow you in two," the captor whispered. "We want you in the engine room. Make a sound and I'll knock you on the head and heave you over the side."

Barefooted, clad in only a pair of light cotton drawers, Bourchard walked below, his hands chained behind him. When he had reached the space of open deck in front of the throttle he paused, but Shane kicked at his bare heels and pushed him up the engine staging to the high-pressure cylinder. Selim had come running up, chattering questions in pidgin English, but one look at Shane's face silenced him. The Arab's eyes narrowed and flashed, and a thin, cruel smile shaped his lips.

"Hold him," snapped Shane. Selim caught the Frenchman by the elbow eagerly.

"You can't speak, but you c'n listen, you double-crossing hound," Shane began. He was quivering from head to foot in a cold rage that made it difficult for him to speak clearly. He licked his lips, and went on. "The engines have slowed down. You can hear 'em. I dunno why. I dunno for how long. Ever since you left, likely. But I'm goin' to know, an' you're goin' to tell me what you've done, see? When you get ready, nod, an' I'll loosen the gag."

BOURCHARD'S black eyes flickered as he glanced at Selim, at the door, and back to Shane. No mercy in either face, no likelihood of any one coming below at half past three in the morning. He gathered himself together for a bull-like rush in the hope of knocking Shane off the staging, but Selim threw a choking forearm across his throat, and Shane pulled the spanner out of his pocket.

"I won't hit you over the head. I'll slam you in the face," he threatened. "I'm just as dirty as you are, you bribe-taking ——. Come through."

Bourchard shook his head. The denial was abrupt, decisive.

In reply Shane picked up the pinch bar and with three swift strokes stripped the asbestos lagging from the steam intake, uncovering the iron pipe for a distance of about eighteen inches. Glancing at Bourchard, he ostentatiously spat on the bare iron. There was a hiss, a puff of steam, and the moisture had vanished.

"I ain't bluffin' you, Bourchard. You can talk now, or I'll push you on to that and hold you there. What did you do to the engines?"

Bourchard nodded to signify his willingness to talk.

"I do nozzing. W'at—" he spluttered the instant the gag was loosened, but before he could say more Shane pulled the knots tight and shoved the squat Frenchman backward. Bourchard hurled himself forward at the same instant, but Selim tripped him, and as he staggered Shane and the Arab threw him on to the steam pipe. His tortured leap sent all three men against the low iron rail where they struggled a second with the smell of scorched flesh in their nostrils.

Bourchard was helpless with his arms bound, and recognizing the fact, he suddenly relaxed. Shane stepped back, panting, and a little sick. The smell in the air was horrible to him.

"What did ye do to the engines?" he gasped out.

Bracing himself for the next assault, Bourchard shook his head in denial and rage. Selim's arm tightened about his throat. Shane set his teeth grimly as he prepared to hurl the other back, and hold him this time, but before he could do so Bourchard gave a muffled sob, his chin strained into the air and his eyes fastened on the engine room door. Shane looked up and saw MacDermut, standing with mouth agape, peering downward.

As Shane looked up the engineer suddenly realized the significance of those locked, struggling figures. He had caught a glimpse of Bourchard's handcuffs, and without pausing to shout MacDermut jumped from the doorway ten feet down the narrow steel ladder and thrust the figures apart.

"You—you—" he shouted into Shane's face, too excited to think of a word.

"Git out of here, Mac. I'll find out how he's wrecking our engines if you'll let me alone," Shane pleaded. "Hear them. He's cut 'em down to fifty-five turns."

"Aye, an' if he has, do ye think I'd use yon," MacDermut blurted, with a gesture at the smoking steam pipe. "D'ye think to get fact with a man gagged? I'll hae no torture, Shane. Take it aff him."

Before the other could move MacDermut whipped out a knife and cut loose the gag himself.

"Weel, speak for yersel', Bourchard," he ordered imperiously.

Bourchard freed his mouth of wisps of waste, glaring malevolently at Shane.

"I have nozzing to say—nozzing," he rasped. "I have worked my best always, and he jump me when I sleep and put on handcuffs. You have seen me, Mister MacDermut. Am I a man despicable, who would stab in the back?"

"Ye haven't acted like it," MacDermut grunted. "Shane, you've done everything for us ye can, and I'm going to log ye the limit for it. Gie me that handcuff key. Now get out—get to yer room, while I talk to Bourchard. And you, ye Arab scut, oil those engines.

"Awell, the engines are running slow Bourchard," MacDermut went on when the two men stood alone. "Ye can fight Shane later. He's young, ye ken, and he's had provocation, ye'll admit—though I'm apologizing for what he did. But, as ye eentimate, yer're a bit too much of a man to double-cross yer own mates, an I been thinking Greathitt's a sneak. But it's one of the two of ye. Steam's high. Engines running sweet. What's wrang, then?"

"If I should tell you you would say I was scared of a burn," Bourchard growled.

"Not wi' one markin' yer legs. An' am I a man or a child?" MacDermut urged. "Speak out, mon."

"When you come into a dock—in a fog when the bridge rings for reduced speed, what you do?" Bourchard asked slowly.

"Gie her less throttle," replied MacDermut impatiently.

"And if they want to slow down more, a little."

"Less throttle."

"It is not done so in French ships. And the English, often they do not touch the throttle," Bourchard explained. "I was angry when you threw me from the engine room without justice. I saw the oiler pretend to pick up his jumper, and stoop near the throttle. In French ships, when we want less speed, we take one turn with the reversing wheel."

"Losh," MacDermut ejaculated. "One turn o' the reversing gear. Aye, it wud cut down the steam expansion. Aye, it would have that effect."

He peered over the rail at the circular steel wheel with which the engines are reversed.

"I canna see fra' here, but yer recht, Bourchard, I'll wager. But mon! Why did ye no tell me—or Shane?"

Bourchard's eyes flashed and he squared his shoulders proudly.

"You called me a thief. He treated me like a coward. What did I care for your 'undred t'ousand dollar bonus?"

MacDermut nodded his approval of the sentiment, and began to chuckle.

"D'ye know any wrinkles for increasin' a ship's speed," he inquired, and as Bourchard shrugged, went on, "not that it matters. For all we're still two weeks of steamin', we'll be puttin' Greathitt in jail in New York before the fifteenth of October."

They did. Despite delays and minor breakdown, the *Sedalia* averaged 12.7 knots across the Western Ocean, and delivered the dates for which the American public was clamoring on October fourteenth, just at sundown.

CLIFF DWELLINGS

by S. Omar Barker

SMOKE-BLACKED, empty and still with years
  Are the little cliff-walled rooms.
White, white as death the ghost-moon leers
  Through the cleft where a lone owl glooms.

Wind and Sun and Storm and Time,
  Death and Drouth and Whims of Fate;
These are careless gods whose rime
  Ends in silence desolate.

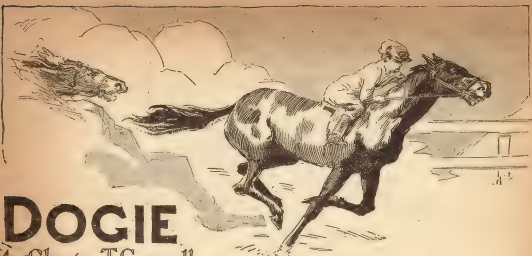
Symbol of Sun on a *kiva* wall;
  Koay's smooth-worn grinding stone;
Broken arrows—are these all?
  Is it strange the wind should mourn?

This was a valley of living men—
  Ask the cliffs how they danced at night—
Do their red fires burn again,
  Sometimes when the moon is white?

Smoke-stained, empty, dead and still,
  Desolate the cliff-carved rooms—
O white ghost-moon o'er the hill,
  Can you glimpse the dancers' plumes?

Down dim trails through a thousand years,
  Phantom footsteps come and go.
Mitsha listens and still hears
  Throoming chants she used to know.

Gods of ruin, doom and death,
  Careless gods of days long gone,
Think you dancing dies with breath?
  Listen! Ghost-drums greet the dawn!



DOGIE

by Chester T Crowell

Author of "Something's Doing in Mexico," "Uncle Dudley Kinda Scouts 'Round," etc.

BOB and I had spent the afternoon at the racetrack. He comes East from Texas annually and always wants to see the ponies go round. At dinner that evening he said—

"I knew the greatest jockey in the world."

Well, nearly every racing fan has an opinion on that subject, so I passed.

"He was the only jockey I ever heard of who never lost a race," Bob continued.

When any one begins talking like that you might as well lay down your hand. I played with a salt cellar for a few seconds and then asked—

"What was his name?"

Bob answered at considerable length:

THIS name was "Dogie." Anyway that was what they called him at home. In school the boys called him "Wart." You remember a dogie is the cow-country word for a runt, a calf of stunted growth.

This boy had eight brothers. Every one of them was six feet tall or over, but Dogie stopped growing at five foot one. The folks around home thought he was sickly at first. Even his mother was afraid there might be something the matter with him. But there wasn't anything wrong. He was just a dogie. At that time people didn't know much about what causes dwarfs. It is something wrong with the pituitary gland, whatever that is. Sometimes it causes giants, too. I read this in a book. The giants are often dumb-bells and they don't usually live long, but the dwarfs are bright. They generally live long and enjoy good health. You can look it up for yourself if the subject interests you.

Anyway this kid was regarded as sickly, although he had muscles like piano wires. He spent the first eight years of his life dodging around, trying to keep out from under the feet of his brothers and father. They were so big, and Dogie was so little that life for him was one continuous danger.

Out on the ranch where they lived the work called for weight as well as strength. You take breaking a colt, for instance, and a midget is at a disadvantage. It is the same way with handling yearlings; you've got to have some weight as well as strength.

About the only thing this kid was good for around the place was to grease the windmills. He was the best in the world at that job because he was so short it didn't make any difference how the thing flapped around in the breeze it wouldn't knock him off the platform. He was under it.

But when Dogie's big brothers played, he had to stay out of the way. There just simply wasn't a safe place for that kid on the ranch after he got out of his mother's lap, unless he took to the brush. So he took to the brush.

Now I'm not going to try to feed you any sentimental slush about him talking to the birds and animals, because I want to tell you just what he did. He would sit for hours watching them. If you have got the patience to go and do the same thing, why, after a while, they'll get used to you.

Animals haven't such sharp eyes as people say; they take notice of a motion a lot more quickly than of anything standing still. But, after they get used to a person standing still, if he moves slowly and doesn't scare them, they'll go on about their business without paying much attention.

That's what Dogie used to do. It's simple, if you understand it, but very few persons do. What I'm leading up to is that Dogie got animal wise. He got so he could watch their eyes and know just what they were going to do next, like a prize fighter watches his opponent. He was queer that way. Whenever you see any one who knows animals like Dogie knew them you never forget him. It shows in his eyes.

Horses especially were like people to Dogie. He would sit on a corral fence or out in the pasture and look at them all day. If one made a mistake about something, got hold of the wrong weed or made a clumsy movement, Dogie would laugh. I've seen a horse look up, when the kid was laughing, as much as to say—

"Well, that's one on me."

Horses are a queer kind of animal, anyway. I have always suspected that they are not entirely devoid of a sense of humor. And I'll tell you why. There was a colt out on the ranch that seemed to be just chock full of mischief. He'd pick up an empty oat sack in his teeth and then parade around, offering the other end of it to any horse that would like to play. Usually another colt would catch hold and then they'd tug and pull for the sack while the whole corral looked on. If the other horses didn't enjoy the show then they certainly fooled me—and I know a few things about horses my own self. I saw this colt, one day, march up to Dogie and offer him the sack. Dogie took it and then had the merriest kind of a romp.

We didn't have any moving-picture shows in those days or much of any other kind of entertainment out in the country, so the boys used to get up races, and turkey shoots and things like that. We'd measure off a mile and send the horses over it, owners riding; yes, and betting, too. It wasn't against the law then.

The first time I ever saw Dogie at one of these races he was about eleven years old. He had sneaked down into the pasture and run off with the funniest old bag of bones that ever wore horsehide. It was the only horse he dared to take without danger of it being missed.

Dogie arrived with twenty-five cents and the gambling fever, so we let him in. It seemed like a shame to take his money, but the poor kid was always being crowded out of everything on account of his size, and I thought it would be kinder to let him run and lose his two bits than to hurt his feelings. I said so and the boys agreed to let him run. Poor old Dogie didn't even have a saddle. We cow hands thought a fancy saddle was essential to a race. Dogie had done his best when he swiped the horse; he didn't dare go near the barn to get a saddle because that would have been a dead give-away.

I offered to let him have mine for one race but he wouldn't take it. He had a buckskin thong with two little eye holes in it tied around his horse and he stuck his big toes into the holes. That was his saddle. His bridle was a halter made out of rope and he carried a willow switch that he had cut on the way. Well, the entries lined up and I fired my pistol.

AWAY they went, Dogie in the lead from the first jump. Somehow that boy could always get his mount off in the lead; I think it was because he simply became part of the horse. He was used to riding bareback and knew every muscle in the animal. He had a way of clamping down with his knees just at the proper second. Dogie's old bag of bones looked awful funny out there in the lead, humping itself up at every jump and bringing all four feet together in midair so that they almost interfered with each other.

The picture suggested a drunken goat. And the funniest thing of all was that the horse ran with his head down. Darned if it didn't look to me like he was going kind of sidewise and scouring the whole road as he moved along.

All of us laughed and some of the boys in the race said afterward that they nearly fell out of their saddles, but just the same that old nag was moving. Dogie rode with a sort of swaying motion, like a sailboat when the waves are coming against it from one side. He was holding a tight rein if you can call a halter a rein, and had evidently hypnotized that old horse into thinking they were just breezing along. He always knew how to kid an animal.

I thought his nag would wear out about two-thirds of the way home and finish last, but when they came into the stretch Dogie was still a length in the lead. That's when the other boys in the race cut loose with whip and spur. Three of them came abreast and then two went ahead of him. They were the two we thought would win, so no one was surprized.

About half-way down the stretch Dogie sort of lengthened out as if he was going to stand up in the saddle, and then he laid himself out along his horse's neck. You would have thought he was afraid the poor old brute might run right out from under him. It sure was a funny sight. But kind of graceful, in a way, too.

Dogie reached back and used his switch a couple of times, and right then and there business picked up. He had kidded that old bag of bones into thinking it was a two year old. The response wasn't beautiful, but it sure was effective.

When a horse lets himself out with all he's got it always looks as if he turns into india rubber and becomes two feet longer and a lot thinner. Dogie's nag couldn't get much thinner, but he shot in between the two leaders and thundered under the tape a neck in the lead.

The spectators stood there blinking with their mouths open while Dogie hopped off his mount and made a bee-line to where I was standing to collect four bits. We always bet even money. The horse instantly forgot all about the race and began eating grass. He was probably the lowest-down beast that ever came under a wire first.

It took a long time for us boys to realize that Dogie's riding had anything to do with his unfailing good luck at the races. We let him run every time he wanted to, but after a while we barred him from riding for any one else. That was done on the ground of his weight. There wasn't a hundred pounds of him even when you included his shirt, pants and pocket knife. Moreover, he didn't use a saddle.

We would have imposed a handicap on him, but he generally rode such a sorry beast that he had already handicapped himself beyond anything we could do. Also we didn't like to admit that he was the best rider in three counties; that went too strong against our pride. Dogie's regular price for winning a horse race for some one else was ten cents. There was an additional understanding that if he lost, the owner didn't owe him anything. But he always collected.

After a while it occurred to us boys that we might be able to recover some of the money Dogie had taken away from us by backing him against cowhands farther away. The standard wage on ranches in those days was fifteen dollars a month, consequently we didn't have to lose over five dollars to be crippled.

So we picked out some of our best ponies and stirred up races in five adjoining counties. Dogie redeemed himself by putting us back on our feet, financially. Then we became ambitious; nothing less than the county fairs would satisfy us. In the course of these local races we had got a pretty good line on our horses; in fact, we settled upon one as the fastest horse in the world, which was fair enough since none of us had stop watches. This horse's name was Persimmon, a big stallion with a disposition so sour that no other name would fit him.

THE business of getting that brute to a county fair turned out to be rather complicated. First of all we had to form a syndicate of twenty partners to pay the expense. Then Dogie went hog wild and demanded a dollar for riding him. Next we had to give up a couple of the nearest fairs in order to wait until all members of the syndicate had enough money to make bets.

During this delay a new complication arose that threatened to leave us without a jockey. There was an old horse on the ranch that no one but Dogie could catch. This beast had to be harnessed for work every day, so Dogie's father objected to the kid's going away. He had been playing hide-and-go-seek with this horse every morning for several years and was therefore accountable for its bad habits.

This horse was a dark bay about ten years old—he'd go down among the trees in the lower pasture and stand right still; that made it hard to see him. You can't tell me he didn't know it, either. Dogie's father would send the boy down into the pasture after him and then the game would start.

Now, nearly every one else would have run his legs off, but Dogie had too much animal sense. He'd pick out a spot where he could see a lot of the pasture and wait until his eyes were well adjusted to the light under the trees; then he'd put his fingers in his mouth and whistle very sharply. That would make the horse's ears turn in the direction of the sound.

If just one ear was visible Dogie would spot him. The horse always stood so that he could peek around a tree. If his eyes met Dogie's he'd trot up and take the bridle, but if Dogie had missed him he'd go on standing still. That was their game. No one else knew how to play it, so the syndicate had to put up two more hard-earned dollars to pay for oats so the horse could be kept in the corral while Dogie was away.

However, we finally got Persimmon to the post with Dogie on him. Every member of the syndicate was draped over the fence around the racetrack clutching the evidence of his fifteen-dollar bet. One month's wages.

A shot was fired and they were off, nine of them, Dogie in the lead as usual. All of us syndicate members were feeling very comfortable when we saw Persimmon round the first turn a length ahead, but on the far side of the track he fell back gradually until he was seven.

I want to tell you that was terrible. The same thought occurred to all of us: Dogie was riding one of those little trick saddles that they insist upon at fancy races and we were afraid he was handicapped. He was used to a regular saddle or none at all. We were worried. Three horses dropped out of the running as they came into the stretch, leaving the three leaders well bunched and Persimmon trailing them by two lengths. I never had seen horses go quite that fast before, so the outlook was far from satisfactory.

Just to keep our courage up we began yelling—

"Come on, Dogie!"

And then the kid went through that funny straightening-out process of his. I think he always did more steering with his knees than with the reins; he was strong as a gorilla. Persimmons got the message and closed in like a streak. I saw him disappear behind a black horse that was leading and then I saw his nose come out on the far side.

Just at that moment a policeman pulled me off the fence. Tom Badley was also arrested. They fined him ten dollars for firing his pistol in the air. But we collected our bets five for one and spent the whole evening riding the hobby horses and drinking soda pop. I don't know why it is, but a cowboy never can stay off those wooden horses at a county fair.

That evening I said to Dogie:

"Boy, you come mighty nigh to killing twenty of the best friends you've got in the world. Why didn't you keep Persimmon in the lead all the way?"

Dogie looked at me with pity for my ignorance.

"Persimmon don't like to run that way," he said. "He wants to chase after the others and then go ahead of them. Otherwise he don't enjoy the race."

Imagine a kid saying anything like that! You'd think he had been talking to the horse.

After this race we cowhands saw wealth coming our way. All we had to do was enter Persimmon and Dogie in every race we could find. But a new obstacle presented itself. Dogie had also made a fifteen dollar bet; consequently he was now rich and ready to retire.

For a year he had been planning a start in the business of raising hogs and I learned afterward that every cent he had ever earned was stowed away in a sugar bowl guarded by his mother. He was a wistful little fellow; always wanting to show off for his mother. His brothers were all such big fellows, and every one spoke so well of them, that Dogie was afraid his mother wouldn't be proud of him. He knew she loved him like a baby, but he wanted to be regarded as a man.

He used to tell her that when he grew up he would buy her something real pretty with the money in the old sugar bowl. Poor kid, he did his best to swagger but he simply couldn't get away with it in that family. Just about the time he thought he was going good one of his brothers would come in and announce that a banker had offered to lend him five thousand dollars on his own note to buy a herd of yearlings.

That was the kind of a family he lived in. It was —— for a dwarf.

SO HE plunged into the hog business. Three months later he had half a dozen pens full of pigs, but the ranch missed several rains and his corn crop burned to a beautiful, golden brown. In other words, Dogie had the choice of buying feed or putting the whole family on a steady diet of young pork. Every cent he had, except one hundred dollars, was tied up. He had held out that much for emergencies. I remember the morning he set out for town to buy grain. You'd have thought he was going to his own funeral.

In town he met a man named Smith and a horse named Geyser. Both of them were fugitives from justice and neither had very good prospects for his next meal. This fellow Smith was a crook and the horse was a lunatic. Lots of race horses are crazy, but there never was a crazier one than Geyser.

His latest outburst had just got Smith into serious trouble. A jockey used his whip on Geyser when they were coming down the stretch and he jumped clear over the railing. Several persons were hurt. As a result Smith dodged a sheriff and managed to get away with Geyser, but a court order tied up most of his money and two other horses he owned.

I don't know how he happened to come to our town; probably he didn't have much choice of trains. Anyway, there he was, trying to sell Geyser, and at the same time keep a string tied to him. His offer was one hundred dollars for the horse with an option to buy him back for two hundred dollars within a month. He needed the hundred to reach friends and get money. But no one wanted his horse. They could look at Geyser and tell that he was a wild one.

Dogie heard the talk around town and then went to see the cause of it. He was already headed for bankruptcy so he decided to take a gamble. An additional hundred dollars within a month would just about pull him out of the hole.

Dogie bought Geyser and rode him home. Smith protested and so did almost every one else in town, but Dogie never had the slightest uneasiness on the subject of his ability to reach a friendly understanding with a horse. He and Geyser looked at each other for about an hour before they set out for the ranch, and after that they seemed to speak each other's language. There were no apples or carrots or sugar or anything like that in the process of getting acquainted. They had just made up to each other in their own way. That's all there was to it.

Dogie and his speculation had a pretty hard time for two weeks. If any one else on the ranch went into the corral where Geyser was penned, one or the other of them would pretty soon try to climb out—usually both. Dogie's father and brothers made up a purse of twenty-five dollars and bought some feed for the hogs, but they had more than twenty-five dollars worth of fun at Dogie's expense.

They used to tell the kid there were only two ways for him to escape the poorhouse; either feed the hogs to Geyser or Geyser to the hogs. This joke had a two-edged meaning. Hogs will eat flesh, of course, but the boys were insinuating that Geyser also would take to a diet of raw meat.

Dogie used to say to his mother:

"Mr. Smith will come back. Don't you think so, mama?"

He was so loaded down with business cares that his mother had to come to the rescue with moral support, so she usually expressed faith in Smith.

Except at meal times Dogie kept out of the way. He'd saddle Geyser every day and give him a run for exercise. He told me afterward that Geyser was the first and only horse he ever handled that really had racing instinct. Geyser was a thoroughbred all right, but he was six years old and never had settled down. Six years is old for a race horse. He was a gray-beard and still wild.

I looked up his record and found that he had won some wonderful races, but he had also come in last several times. In other words, Geyser was one of those crazy animals with a yard of pedigree that will run or not just as he pleases. What tickled Dogie, though, was his eagerness to run ahead of Spot, the dog. Spot liked to race. I think most dogs do, especially if they have gone over the track a few times.

Well, one day Smith came back, and he brought the promised two hundred dollars, so business was looking up for Dogie. Our rural telephone was out of commission that day, so Smith had to come out to the ranch in person. When he heard that Dogie had been racing Geyser against Spot every morning he nearly fainted.

"It's an eighth wonder you aren't dead," he said.

And then he told us about Geyser's playful habits. I gathered that no one was safe when Geyser took the bit in his teeth. Likely as not he'd climb up into the judge's stand and bite one of the officials. While Smith talked, the rest of us sort of peeped at Dogie's mother to see what impression all this was making. We were uneasy because she worried some about the kid. Naturally he wasn't much different from a baby to her, because all of the other boys grew so tall. But she wasn't scared at all. She laughed.

"Do you think I am joking?" Smith asked her.

"I know you are not joking," she said, "but you and Geyser just never happened to meet any one who can ride like Dogie."

I think that conversation was what put the idea into Smith's head to take Dogie with him. The kid was afraid he wouldn't get permission, so he went without asking and telegraphed after they were over the Louisiana State line. He probably thought the state line protected him in some way. None of us worried about his going, because Dogie always had a lot of common sense. We knew he could ride and we had heard that a good jockey was better paid than a cow hand. The only uncertain element was Smith. He didn't measure up very high in our estimation.

THE next we heard from Dogie he was at a hotel in New Orleans and scheduled for a race one week later. He was going to ride Geyser and he said the odds would be twelve to one. He was wishing he had some money to bet and some one to bet it for him, because he didn't understand just how it was done at a regular race track. Also he didn't believe they'd let him bet. Smith, he wrote, wouldn't let him have any money for fear he might take a notion to go home.

I didn't have much work on hand at the time, so I went to New Orleans for the races. Dogie was tickled pink to be so important. He showed me around the town as if he owned it. I told him I was going to bet ten dollars, nine on him and one on Geyser. In our set that was pretty heavy gambling, so the kid was impressed. However, it looked to me like a good bet on a purely gambling basis. I don't usually bet, as you know, but they had been clocking the horses and plain figures showed that Geyser was the fastest. The question was whether he'd run on the track or all over the neighboring counties. People said that some days he wouldn't run at all. Geyser was a prima donna with an ingrowing disposition, so he went on the score board as a twelve-to-one shot.

On the opening day of the winter race-meet I received a letter from Dogie's mother inclosing five twenty-dollar bills. She wanted me to place a bet on Dogie. None of us ever mentioned Geyser; you'd have thought the boy was entered as a horse instead of a jockey. The letter said I was to tell Dogie about the bet only after he won and then turn the money over to him for further instructions. That's like a woman; they never think of the possibility of losing.

But I happened to know where she got the hundred dollars and my conscience was uneasy; that hundred dollars was chicken and egg money, the accumulation of a good many months. So I wired her:

"Has it occurred to you that he might lose? Answer."

She wired back:

"Sure he might lose. But he is my baby."

So I bet the hundred dollars.

Some people don't get much kick out of a horse race unless they have a bet posted, but if I bet I get so much kick I don't enjoy the sport. Money, out our way, doesn't come easy. We work for it. Turning loose one hundred dollars that afternoon for a bookmaker's slip of paper was just about as hard a job as I ever undertook. A mental picture of Dogie's mother feeding his hogs and wishing him luck haunted me until the horses left the post.

There were ten starters, rather a large list, so the men in red jackets had to work pretty hard getting them lined up. And Geyser gave them more trouble than any other three. I don't know just how Dogie managed it, but whenever he brought a horse to the post the animal was already crouching for a spring. Dogie seemed to know how to give him news of the situation and put him on edge for the getaway. I think it must have been the way he sat, or some special sort of knee pressure. He could get a horse crouched for a spring even when riding him for the first time. That boy simply spoke horse language with his legs.

Well, finally they got away, Geyser in the lead and cutting across for a place next to the rail. Dogie was always afraid of being jostled in the first turn of the track. He would either have got away in the lead or kept them there all day. After the first turn he let Geyser breeze along until four horses were ahead of him and two others gaining.

I was watching their heads and tails bob up and down on the far side of the track when Smith came up beside me and began to groan. It looked to him like Geyser wouldn't run. I didn't know whether he would or wouldn't, but I felt mighty uneasy about that hundred dollars when I listened to the groans. I told Smith that it looked to me like Dogie was keeping clear for the inside position and dodging trouble at the second turn but Smith just sputtered. He sounded like a leaking steam valve. He said they were going to pocket Geyser on the turn and sure enough they did.

It was Dogie's first experience against real track generalship. I don't know much about such things, but I could see that they had worked him away from the rail on the turn and at the same time crowded the track in front of him. Evidently they judged Geyser was going to run if he got a chance. This maneuver brought seven horses into the stretch pretty well bunched, four ahead of Geyser, two behind.

And then Dogie lengthened out in that funny way of his, falling forward along the horse's neck. Well, sir, you would have thought a bee had stung old Geyser. His belly drew in and his whole body lengthened out; it actually looked like his neck got longer. The only question after that was whether he could overcome a lead of nearly two lengths in such a short distance. If he could, Dogie's mother was certainly going to collect twelve hundred dollars.

Just at that time it would have helped my nerves a lot if Dogie had been using a whip, but he didn't. Geyser was too temperamental. The whole job was being done by power of suggestion. Geyser shot through a space between two horses just in front of him and then went after the favorite, a slender, light bay, as pretty a horse as I have ever seen, and running like a deer.

Geyser ran more like a ——. He was a mean scoundrel and just as crazy as anything in an asylum, but tireless. Dogie had kidded the old idiot into thinking he had the bit in his teeth and was cutting up. Dust and clods of dirt began to shoot out behind him and the space between him and that light bay just closed up like some one shutting a door. Personally, though, I think the finest thing about that race was that it didn't last long because I couldn't have stood much more. Geyser thundered under the wire half a length ahead and then danced all over the track when Dogie tried to stop him. He didn't seem to be the least bit tired or winded.

Smith said to me—

"He got loose and ran away."

THAT evening at the table Dogie said to me:

"I can win with this horse any time I start unless they show me the clocker's report on a faster one. He's the easiest horse to fool that I ever struck. He just simply hasn't got any sense at all. The only thing I have to do is jump him into the lead and get his racing fever up, then we breeze along until some of them pass us. A horse doesn't think as fast as a man; it takes more time for him to get mad. If the jockey gets worried first and tries to hurry Geyser he goes crazy, but just play like you haven't noticed that there is a race going on and he takes the bit in his teeth and runs away."

"Did he run away with you?" I asked.

"Sure," Dogie answered. "But the sweet part of it is that I can make the poor old idiot run away every time. He's crazy I tell you. I could kid that horse out of his eye teeth. I wish I had a thousand dollars to bet on him tomorrow."

That was the psychological moment, so I hauled out the twelve hundred dollars and laid it on the table. Dogie nearly fell into his soup. It was the first time in his life that he had seen more than two hundred cash. He counted it until I thought the figures would wear off before he came to and asked me where I got it.

When I told him he had to struggle to choke back the tears. The only living thing he was maudlin about was his mother. The Presidency wouldn't have meant half so much to him as her bet. By some fortunate accident I had sense enough to show him his mother's letter and not display the telegram in which she referrred to him as her baby. Later in the evening I burned the telegram as insurance against possible accidents.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he said. "We'll hold out the two hundred. Then mama is bound to double her money. Tomorrow you bet the thousand on Dogie to win. Don't bother with place or show. That lunatic either comes in ahead or bites himself and dies of hydrophobia."

I bet the thousand as directed, but the odds had gone down to six to one. There were several persons who thought Geyser had at last found his master and quite a few bets were being placed. That forced down the odds. No one disputed the horse's speed.

Well, Dogie repeated. Racing people are quick on the trigger when they make up their minds and five men were hunting for Dogie that night. They said he looked to them just like what I told you he was, the greatest jockey in the world. They wanted him.

He and I talked over the situation before we went to bed. I said—

"Dogie, you've got a career ahead of you in this game if you want it."

"I don't want it, Bob," Dogie said. "These are the funniest looking people I ever met in my life. A lot of those fellows that mill around under the grandstand look to me like crooks. Smith looks like a crook, too. If you have my six thousand tucked away close to your hide I think we'll cut out of here while the going is good. It must be pretty hard on mama, having to feed those hogs every day."

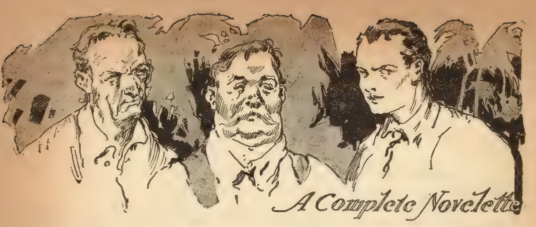
I said:

"Dogie, no man could quit with a cleaner record than yours. You have won every race you ever started in and never had a first-class mount in your life."

So Dogie and I lit out for Texas. He's done right well in the hog business, but he still loves horse races. He's got a track of his own now. And the races are conducted according to his own idea. Dogie trots out a couple of colts, lines them up, and starts them—no jockeys. The one that comes under the wire first gets an apple or a lump of sugar. That may sound slow to you, but Dogie nearly goes cuckoo with excitement. One day he fell off the fence and broke his arm, rooting for Geyser's grandson.

"BOB," I said to him afterward, "you never did tell me his name. Dogie and Wart are just nicknames. What's his last name?"

"It's the same as mine," Bob replied. "He's my kid brother."



THE THREE TRADERS

by J. Allan Dunn

Author of "Thieves' Honor," "Black Ivory," etc.

THERE were three traders on Jijilap. One was the Scotchman, Duncan MacIntosh, a capable man but a dour one, whose wrath flamed when they insulted his clan—as they often did—by addressing him as Mackintosh, or even McIntosh; showing thereby their ignorance and disregard of Gaelic customs. MacIntosh was inclined to drink too much trade gin for the good of his liver, but his head was adamant to alcoholic attack. He was long and lean when he first came to the South Pacific and years of tropic sun had reduced him to what was little better than a working skeleton. It had not so affected Henry Harrison from Sydney.

Unlike MacIntosh, Harrison abused his own patronymic. He cheerily styled himself 'Ennery 'Arrison and considered that he was speaking the king's English. Not that, being Australian, he cared much about the king, merely a person who, in Harrison's opinion "'ad been born with a golden crown in 'is mouth, the lucky stiff," and was really no whit better than himself, who had several gold crowns in his own mouth, born of youthful carelessness, parental indulgence, cheap candy and chalky teeth.

'Ennery was strong for the "Hempire." He was not as efficient in many ways as MacIntosh but the natives would do more for him. He was an amiable drunkard and a fine pool-player before he went *into trading for the Starlight Soap Company.* But even if he could have imported a pool table to Jijilap the cockroaches would have eaten the cloth inside a week.

Harrison had the complexion of a new brick, a paunch that nothing could diminish, blue eyes that twinkled and a yellowish, sun-bleached mustache of which he was inordinately proud, though it would have suited the makeup of a trooper in a crack cavalry regiment better than 'Ennery's round moon of a face.

MacIntosh worked for another company their stations several miles apart. There was lots of copra available on Jijilap, which was natively ruled over by three chiefs, who were brothers, and who divided the island into three sections, each starting at the tiptop of the volcanic mountain crest, that still emitted vapor and sometimes growled in its sleep as if with indigestion, down through grassy uplands, thick bush, across beach and lagoon to the outer reef; three great slices of island pie.

A pie full enough of plums for all of them; fish from the reef, lagoon and beach; coconuts and fruit from the lowlands, besides the products of the cultivated fields; wild pig from the grasslands and crags; birds from the forest, whose plumage was used for adornment, and the bodies of the wood pigeons for food. A goodly heritage divided between them by Matesei, the king, on his deathbed.

Vetesi and Puhoteke, second and third sons respectively, were well satisfied; but *Kaiti, the eldest son, who had dreamed* that all the kingdom should be his, was discontented, and the more he brooded over the matter, the more his injury grew. He had a wife, Minea, the daughter of the high chief of the island of Kasilak, who fostered his dissatisfaction and embittered it for the sake of her son.

With clever words she sowed the seed of ambition in the minds of Kaiti's followers, watering it with the suggestion of greater possessions and the pick of the women of Puhoteke and Vetesi, telling them that Kaiti was the rightful ruler and that they were Kaiti's men. But it was only seed that had not yet germinated and, so far, there was no hatred between the three clans, save in the hearts of Kaiti and Minea, his wife.

Even on Jijilap blood was thicker than water and kinship still prevailed. Only Kaiti grew more and more sour as the ferment of thwarted aspirations worked within him and Minea kneaded the mass subtly. Kaiti drank more and more *kawa* and toddy made from the inflorescence of the coco-palm and the liquor slowly changed the chemistry of his spirit to gall.

Since he could not arouse enthusiasm among his followers to rise and massacre their kin, he spent the hours brewing hatred against all the world and the three white men in particular, restrained from murdering the latter because he was afraid of their superior *mana* or supernatural power; and of their guns.

MacIntosh was in the territory of Puhoteke, Harrison in that of Vetesi. The third white man had his place on the beach, in the land of Kaiti. There was no open enmity among the three brothers. Their people visited with each other and feasts were held together in full friendship, gifts interchanged and there was intermarriage, with no lines drawn for trespass. Puhoteke and Vetesi were friendly to the whites, who brought them trade of tobacco, salmon, cloth and other matters in exchange for coconuts, candle and ivory nuts, and labor at copra time.

Sometimes Kaiti traded with them also, first with one and then with the other, trying to establish ill-feeling between the two, since he could cause either one to show more profit than the other, if Kaiti favored him. Also he tried to get more in trade by playing one against the other; these schemes being the schemes of Minea, his wife, who was a clever, handsome, jealous, ambitious, vindictive and unscrupulous female.

THE third white man was also a trader, but he worked for no firm and he did not bother about copra or any kinds of nuts, about sharks' fins or bêche-de-mer or turtle shell. The natives knew him for a *Merikani*—American—said that his nose was shaped like a canoe and marveled at his everlasting energy. MacIntosh and Harrison generally referred to him as the "Yank."

They did not exactly dislike him but there was a certain racial antipathy between them that had started about the year 1775 and had never entirely died down. The World War had done something to restore matters, but MacIntosh, who was fifty-four, had been too old to recruit and Harrison, who had an irregular heart, had not been permitted to. Whereas Jim Clinton had done his bit and had a couple of decorations stowed away somewhere that he never showed and never looked at. The war was over and he had gone back to the South Seas, determined, at thirty, to make his pile quickly in the pearl-shell lottery.

He was leaner, longer and browner than MacIntosh and his eyes were gray. He was as hard as nails and he kept himself in shape, living on Jijilap only during the diving season, leaving it, when the rains started, for Suva, where he lived simply and took in the moving pictures, the restaurants, the band concerts and the radio programs. MacIntosh and Harrison stayed on their jobs; the Scot, because he could save money; the Australian, because he was always in debt to the Starlight people since the price of squareface had advanced and his salary had not. His employers were not philanthropists, any more than MacIntosh's.

A certain amount of friction was kept alive on sundry occasions when Clinton hoisted on the pole that stood outside his shack the Stars and Stripes. On these occasions, MacIntosh flaunted the scarlet cross of Saint Andrew on its white ground and Harrison the blue ensign with its one big star and five smaller ones of the Australian Commonwealth.

On their own national holidays they flew the Union Jack and Clinton came back with the American ensign once again. On the whole, they were several grades above friendly enemies. At fairly regular intervals they visited with each other, grogged together, smoked together and wished each other good luck. Clinton knew they called him Yank, and realized there was an assumption of superiority therein that did not bother him. For they were both working on salary and a slim, a very slim, commission and he was getting along very nicely with his pearl shell.

Not pearls. They were too much like angels' visits, few and far between, but first-class, black-edged pearl shell, top quality, heavy weight, without wormholes. Shell in great demand for buttons, for the handles of fancy cutlery, for inlay work in Oriental lacquer and European papier-mâché, and for various forms of ornamentation and cheaper jewelry.

He was the working partner under a lease that he would have had trouble in getting for himself, being an American, from the Australian Commonwealth, that, since the war, reckoned Jijilap as its lawful possession, and to whom the three chiefs were only titular owners. The sleeping partner had made the original discovery, garnered the shell within the twelve-fathom depth and gone back to Sydney where he married a wife who disapproved severely of any husband of hers—she was a widow—going away overnight, much less sojourning in the South Seas which she mentally peopled with lascivious and much too attractive sirens, whose coppery skin was likely to be much too lavishly displayed. She disapproved strongly of Clinton despite the fact that he was annually giving them an increasing income that bade fair to become in time a tidy fortune.

The sleeping partner put up the lease, his discovery of the shell and the necessary capital. And Clinton, who was not called a Yank without reason, put in his brains and labor on a sliding scale that gave him fifty per cent. up to a certain yield, and, after that, an increasing amount as the net profits grew larger. Since the original lessee considered the field on Jijilap fairly well exhausted, he had signed the sublease contract thinking he had all the best of it.

Clinton imported six men from the Tuamotus, members of the fearless but friendly tribes of those Dangerous Isles. He brought three diving-suits, two for the pick of his men, one for himself. And, finding banks of the fine shell at a depth where even modern diving was close to its limit, he utilized the ingenuity of Yankeedom and devised many contrivances.

Sometimes he went under himself and made survey of the ledges, later on placing dynamite where whole sections could be displaced without much loss of shell, to be later brought up by dredges and tongs. Every season his schooner was well filled with the precious freight which he sold sometimes in Singapore and sometimes in Suva.

His blasting kept his section of the lagoon fishless and, for this, he paid tribute to Kaiti, to compensate him for loss of natural revenue. Otherwise he was independent of him, too much so for the greed of the chief who did not recognize the fact that he was, after all, only a chief by courtesy of the commonwealth.

So the remote isle of Jijilap on the Fourth of July in the year nineteen hundred and twenty-odd, with the Stars and Stripes snapping in the trade and, further along the coast, the banners of MacIntosh and Harrison paradoxically celebrating—or perhaps defying—the birth of American Independence.

Clinton made it a holiday but they did not. In his bush capital Kaiti grouched and drank *kawa*, which affects bodily but not mental coordination, and listened to the counsel of Minea, his wife, who told him that he was a fool not to make all the white men pay him tribute instead of demanding labor, and to make Kalinitoni pay double what he did now. Otherwise, to make trouble

"You say it is your island," she pressed him. "Did you not say so when you came to my father for me? Perhaps you lied to me. Or you have drowned your manhood in *kawa*."

Then, as Kaiti glowered at her with eyes reddened by indulgence in the potent stuff, she called to a girl to make a fresh supply. After all, the *kawa* made him more responsive and she was careful not to cross him, knowing that when he broke loose he was more fiend than man. Besides, the liquor kept him chained. It paralysed his limbs while he could still listen to her insinuating talk. She was a very clever woman, Minea, with far more brains that Kaiti, who had the mind of a child, the brawn of a Samson and the disposition of a spoiled, a badly spoiled, and mischievous boy.

Also Minea had her own private hatreds—against Mesi, the head wife of Puhoteke, who had borne him five male children and was always displaying them or talking about them—against Tuni, the favorite of Vetesi who was much better looking and younger than Minea, and knew it.

"If it *is* your island," she said, "why do you let them fly those war cloths? Lo, there are three white men and each has a different cloth. It is true that Arisoni and Makinitosi sometimes fly the same one, but it is different from that of Kalinitoni, who yesterday refused me twenty sticks of tobacco. Set those two against the one, Kaiti, and, if there be any left, kill him. For, if you make them fight with each other, then the men of your brothers will fight also for them and perhaps your brothers may be killed.

"At least they will be weakened. Are you not the oldest of them all? Is not my son and your son to rule here, and not the misshapen children of that lazy Mesi—" this was a double lie—"and the sons of Tuni, who pretends that she is with child so that Vetesi will give her yet more gifts. Does not——?"

"Your tongue clacks like the wind in the palms," said Kaiti. "Be silent. Bring me the fresh bowl of *kawa* and begone."

She went, but she saw his reddened eyes regarding the cloth with the white stars on the blue ground and the red bars against the white, rippling audaciously; and there was a smile on her face as she left the terrace.

AFTER Clinton had set the flag flying he took his swim while Upolu, his Paumotuan jack-of-all-trades, cooked breakfast. He stroked out to the anchored raft from which he dredged and hauled out on it, much like a seal, basking in the early sunlight and watching the flag flapping; whistling Yankee Doodle half unconsciously and shifting into a more modern rendition of the theme in a voice that was somewhat nasal but still musical.

"I'm a Yankee-Doodle dandy
I'm a Yankee-Doodle boy."

His thoughts clicked off in retrospect. George Cohan with his eccentric dance and his eccentric hair—really born on the Fourth of July—then later shows he had seen, a vision of Broadway glittering with colored lights and packed, sidewalk to sidewalk, with footfolk and motorfolk, herded by autocratic traffic cops. It all seemed a long way and a long, long time from Jijilap.

The last of the mist was trailing from the crags. Soon there would be only the wisp of vapor from the somnolent crater. A flock of sooty terns slid croaking from the forest, flapping out to sea. The sun, high enough now to bathe the beach in golden glow, had dissolved the gloomy shadows of the woods and the island was draped in a mantle of emerald and jade. The pigeons crooned and the green and vermilion parakeets squawked and screamed. Back of him the reef boiled and hissed on the flood tide and every little while the overflow sent a long wave seething gently shoreward, lifting the big raft.

"It sure is beautiful," said Clinton aloud, "but I'd swap it all for five minutes in a taxicab on Fifth Avenue. If the luck holds, I'll be there this time next year and we'll celebrate. Prohibition or no prohibition!

"I'll clean my guns and overhaul my tackle this morning," he told himself, "and, as soon as the sun gets off the lagoon, we'll go and try that pool Upolu talks so much about. I'll have the boys row me over to Harrison's after supper. Even if it *is* the Fourth of July. Mac'll be there and I'll get him to give us Cutty Sark. That 'll put him in a good humor and 'Ennery' can tell me all about the time he won the snooker-pool championship of Sydney, or whatever it was. We'll smoke the pipe of peace, bury the hatchet and forget Lexington and Bunker Hill. Come home by moonlight. Regular Hands-Across-the-Sea program. I'm hanged if I'm not as lonesome as a lost purp in a snowstorm.

"Gee, I'd give a ton of shell to go on a snowshoe hike. Snow! I've forgotten what it looks like."

Upolu appeared and called, and he slid into the water to stalk out, lean and muscular, to breakfast.

The shadow of the mountain crept down its flanks and out across the glassy surface of the lagoon. There was plenty of daylight, or twilight. Back of the crags the sun was blazing, slowly gathering to itself the glory of sunset. The booming of the mountain pigeons came from the forest; the sooty terns came flapping back. From the bush streaks of pale-blue smoke rose like slender columns skyward, for the seawind had gone and the landwind not yet risen.

Scarlet footed boatswain birds, white as snow, sank like flakes among the palms and breadfruits, croaking fretfully. The chattering parrakeets discussed the day. Shoals of fish darted away beneath the hull of the dingey as they paddled leisurely for Upolu's pool of abundance. They had taken part of their supper with them, and a flat stone on which to make fire and broil the catch, native fashion.

Upolu spoke in soft tones as they made for the shallows and at last softly lowered the anchor two fathoms, to rest on the edge of the swiftly shelving sides of the pool as the boat swung head on to the current.

Upolu produced his treasures, hooks that were self-baiting, beautifully made of two pieces of lustrous shell, united with sennit so fashioned that they twisted like a hurt minnow as they were raised and lowered near the bottom. The fish bit avidly, pink and silver groupers and blue-backed sea salmon, a burnished treasury that gleamed in the twilight while the faint phosphorescence streaked from the taut lines as they hauled them in.

Upolu turned chef and they ate luxuriously before they started smoking. Back of the mountain the sky had turned to olive, grading through aquamarine to primrose, slowly fading. Soon the stars would come out with a rush. The boat was deep with their catch.

"We'll be getting along," said Clinton. "Going to Harrison's tonight."

There was a gleam of teeth. The Paumotuans had friends also. There would be singing, dancing on the beach.

"*Maiti, Kalinitoni*," said Upolu, steward, chef, foreman and boatsteerer. "*Maiti no.* It is well."

Then he clucked a warning. A canoe was coming out of a creek in the mangroves half a mile away; a double-outrigger with the paddlers seated abreast, twenty of them. The beautifully shaped craft had a high prow and stern in which pearl inlay winked faintly as it came on fast. It was Kaiti's own canoe and he sat on a little platform by the stern.

"I wonder what the old cadger wants now," said Clinton and quietly hitched his automatic toward the front.

He had been carrying it with him of late. Kaiti had been getting a little out of hand in his demands. His followers were amiable enough, but Kaiti's was beginning to ask for gifts as if they were his by right. Clinton did not intend to see it that way.

There were spears in the canoe, but that was usual when a chief made a trip. And there was a musket between Kaiti's knees, an old Springfield, fifty-eight caliber, changed from its Civil War percussion lock to flint, the nipple removed and a vent opened up for priming, flashpan and spring added; remade for trading and decorative purposes, more authoritative than harmful, a badge of authority, Kaiti's scepter and his father's before him.

THE canoe came up with a back wash of the paddles, stopped alongside. Clinton had checked the inhaul of his anchor and showed no surprise.

"I want *tabaki, samani*," grunted Kaiti. He was half drunk. The odor of palm toddy tainted the sweet air of the evening.

"Store closed up, Kaiti's. You too late anyway. This day no walk along work. Besides you've had all that's coming to you, you old pirate. Plenty too much you catch long time," he added in beach vernacular.

Kaiti scowled, reached out and picked up one of the pearl hooks, muttering in Jijilap, too swiftly for Clinton, with his limited vocabulary, to follow. He asked Upolu to translate.

"He say that belong along him. He say you stealum all shell belong along him. He say you give big fellow pay along that shell. You no pay he make too much trouble along of you."

Kaiti was in a nasty humor. Minea had turned counsel into nagging and he was minded to show her that he could handle things his own way. Already he had been to Harrison's demanding salmon and tobacco, from MacIntosh he had asked gin. Twin curt refusals had got under his chocolate-hued hide. Clinton was an interloper. His mind worked like a child's, incapable of planning a move ahead. He was ugly, dangerous.

Clinton's eyes narrowed. He was not worried. His gun was a Luger, chosen for its long-range possibilities, and he had no question of his being able to put the canoe out of commission if it was necessary. He was not looking for trouble, but a clean-up of the profitable shell. And he had no quarrel with the tribesmen.

It would be simpler to demonstrate a problem in geometry to Kaiti than to make him recognize the fact that his island belonged to the Australian Commonwealth. No commissioner had formally taken over Jijilap, no cruiser had ever visited it, it had known no reprisals for outbreak. Kaiti's father had been friendly with the whites, proud of having them on his island, appreciating the trade goods.

"Let me look along that hook," he said and took it from Kaiti before the latter's drink-dulled, low-grade brain understood the move, his pride rather prompting him to believe that the trader's soft tone meant that he was willing to discuss the matter.

Then his face grew black with a rush of angry blood as Clinton dropped it into his pocket. To have relinquished it would have meant loss of prestige with Kaiti's men and with his own.

The lagoon was beginning to reflect the afterglow. Rosy vapor seemed to be rising from its depths. Bream commenced to leap, their broad sides flashing.

"That shell, mine. That *puloa*—hook—mine," growled Kaiti, his big fist clenched about his musket. "You catch plenty big fellow fish. You give me half." He used the native word, illustrating it with a swift stroke down and one across the imaginary line.

"Those my fish, Kaiti. Suppose you want one, all right."

A bream slid out of the glowing water, curved in the air, taking the fly it had fancied, broadside to the right. Clinton pulled his gun and fired. It was not a hard target as it hung for a moment in midleap, as if suspended, but the effect of the shot was startling. The fish flopped on the surface, struggling to swim downwards, its bladder pierced, its back broken.

Upolu reached out a blade and brought it in, handing it to one of the men in Kaiti's canoe. Impressed but furious, Kaiti ordered it flung overboard. He snarled an order and the canoe swung ahead, the quick, strong paddles sending it forward at full speed. It made a wide curve and swept on toward the mangroves, into them, vanished

"Too much he mad, I think," said Upolu, commencing to haul in the anchor. "Now we go along Arrisoni, boss?"

Clinton nodded, wondering if he had not been more showy than diplomatic.

"He'll have to stay mad then," he said. "I'm not going to stand for blackmail."

KAITI was, to all intents and purposes, mad. Just that. Beyond the little reason he possessed. He had been made to look small in the eyes of his paddlers, he had been insulted in the worst fashion. His dignity had been flouted.

To offer a high chief overripe fruit, a fish that was not, save for the slight prick of the barbless hook inside its mouth, as perfect as when it swam; even to present a dead bird with ruffled feathers, was an offence not to be condoned, as criminal as crossing the royal shadow or breaking a royal *tabu*. It was unwitting on the part of Clinton.

His men guessed at the trouble, but dismissed it, elated at the return of the hook, the good shot of Clinton. It was a small thing, but it was the last straw upon the camel that carried the dignity of Kaiti. For one of his own the penalty was death—and not a swift one. Only by death could it be forgotten or condoned.

The breaking water, the leaping bream, the quick shot and the crash of the dying fish—only those had held his hand, restrained his voice from ordering instant battle. His big frame shook with rage. He knew his paddlers, avoiding his gaze, were wondering what ailed their chief. He ground his teeth in a fury as the canoe grounded and he leaped ashore to the trail that led to his village.

Makinitosi, Arrisoni and then Kalinitoni, all had refused him tribute. All had treated him, a chief, as if he were dirt.

He would show them. He would spit upon their war cloths and he would kill them and drink the broth of their hearts, seated upon three coconuts, to avoid evil. But he would not tell Minea. She would scold, the story would pass among the women, among the tribes. Kaiti had been made to look small, had been offered unfit food.

"He who speaks of this thing," he said to his followers, "feeds sharks. But the head of this white man I will hang upon the ridgepole of my house. And on either side shall be the heads of Arrisoni and Makinitosi. I have spoken."

The men rolled their eyeballs in the gloom and trailed him mutely up the narrow path where the dense bush rose like a wall on either side, wondering if this was to be war and how the brothers of Kaiti, who were friendly to Arrisoni and Makinitosi, would take it.

It was cool on the mountain height. The fresh air and the climb sobered Kaiti somewhat, but did not abate the smart to his pride. There was only one salve for that. He must strike. Yet, in the swirling fog of desire for revenge that gathered in his mind, he saw one clear vision. The white man, unafraid, pocketing the hook, then the gleaming fish, the flash and bark of the gun that came from nowhere, the dying bream, all in the winking of an eye.

"*Aie!* They shoot swift and straight, those white men!"

And he had but a musket, without much powder. And it would not hit a tree at twenty paces.

He swilled *kawa* that night until his wives lifted him, helpless, and put him on his mats.

MACINTOSH never recited Burns—he pronounced it with at least three R's rolling in the midst of the revered name—until he was mellow with Hollands and, as this was not a holiday with him, he was quite sober when he arrived at Harrison's, far soberer than Harrison, who invariably commenced his potations at suppertime and was well into a bottle when the other arrived.

"I see," said the Scot, "that the Yank is fleein' his gaudy banner. 'Tis na doot the bir-r-thday o' Lincoln, or Washington or Br-r-r-yan. I ne'er saw sic' a countree for celebrations. They'll be havin' a day set apar-r-t for Volstead, the next theeng ye ken."

"O'o in —— is Volstead? I never 'eard of 'im."

"None ye wad respec', Henr-r-y. A puir misguided mor-r-tal that Noah wad never ha' let aboar-r-d the Ar-r-k. A fir-r-st cousin to Pussyfoot Johnson, I'm thinkin'. Ye'll have heard o' *him?* If they had their ain way, my lad, the warld wad be a dry an' dreary place. I wish that Bur-r-r-ns could ha' met this Volstead. He'd ha' written a piece aboot him."

"Did he ever run for President?" asked Harrison, affecting to remember the name, refusing MacIntosh superior information on any subject.

"'Tis likely, on the Prohibition ticket. I dinna ken the Yank voted for him. Ah-h-h!"

He achieved a combination of Hollands, a young coconut containing a pint of cool, sweet liquid, and a dash of bitters.

"I'll be able to spare ye but one case, Henr-r-y," he said as he wiped off the ragged ends of his grizzled mustache by the simple process of drawing the hairs into his mouth by an almost prehensile lower lip. "My last shipment was shor-r-t six cases. I r-r-efused Kaiti any this mor-rnin'. He wanted a case an' came doon to a bottle, but I wad gie him none.

"He told me he was thir-r-sty an' I told him he c'ud refresh himsel' wi' some o' the water he soaked his copr-r-a in the last time he br-r-ought me some, the sweendler. I ken he got my meanin'. I had a bottle wi' aboot twa guid dreenks left in it on the table an' he spotted it. I made a point o' drinkin' it a' mysel'. He didna like it, but I'm no carin', for I'm fair sick o' his cadgin'. He's been tryin' to set you an' me at loggerheids to force the trade up for his own advantage an' I dinna care to be fashed wi' him langer."

Harrison chuckled.

"'E came 'ere between three and four o'clock, looking for terbaccy and salmon. 'E didn't say anything to me about booze. I've turned him down before. Let 'im stick to 'is *kawa* and palm toddy. 'E did me a dirty trick by promising me twenty 'ands to split nuts an' then wanting to double the price at the larst minnit, when 'e knew I *'ad* to 'ave 'em to keep me try-pot goin', Blarst 'im! An' then 'e 'as the blightin' cheek to arsk me for a case of salmon an' a 'undred sticks of terbaccy. Didn't want to take no. I told 'im to get to —— orf my veranda—an' to stay orf. 'E didn't 'arf like it. I'll bet 'e went round to the Yank's. That's 'is territory, annyw'y."

"He's a sour ——, youn' Kaiti. No like his feyther. You didna ken him, Henr-r-y. Vetesi takes after him. I'm no so sure o' Puhoteke. An' I've an idea 'tis Minea is the worst of the lot an' Tuni the best."

"She's a cute little trick," agreed Harrison. "I can 'ear the Yank's launch c'min'. 'E aint such a bad sort, but they didn't ought to allow Yanks any concessions on islands belongin' to the Hempire. If they want to go pearlin' or gettin' copra, let 'em do it on their own territory."

"They've no' much. Save Hawaii an' that's a wee north for aught but sugar cane."

"They've got Guam, they've got Tutuila,

Tau and Rosel in Samoa and they've got the whole bloomin' Philippines. But 'e 'as to come buttin' in 'ere."

"He's wor-r-kin' under an Australian concession."

"What's the hodds? 'E's liftin' the shell, ain't 'e? 'E's gettin' the big end of the profits, ain't 'e? 'E ain't done much crowin' 'imself but most of them Yanks make me sick, tellin' 'ow they won the war. Yah! Like a man sent in the larst bloomin' ten minnits of a Rugby game an' runnin' fresh through a stale field that's been scrappin' all afternoon. 'Is wind is good an' 'e ain't scrum-drunk an' tired out. So 'e canters through an' makes the touchdown. 'Ooray for the 'ero! W'ot?"

"Your remar-r-k has a cer-r-tain amount of reason but it's no verya judeecious. Forby, we had oor backs against the wa', at that, an', if you'll no allow they won it, you'll be har-r-d put to it to deny we were close to losin' it."

"Harrison grunted.

"If you're siding with a —— Yank agen' me—" he began.

"We're three white men wi' a common ancestry an' its fit we should a' stand together in case of trouble wi' Kaiti."

"Trouble wi' Kaiti? 'Ow?"

"I've been here langer than you, Henr-r-y. Kaiti wants to run the whole island an' Minea has got br-rains. I'm sorry we baith had to tur-r-n him doon i' the ane day. If he c'ud per-r-suade Puhoteke an' Vetesi to make common cause wi' him against us, we'd be sair put to't."

"Why should either of them tie in with 'im? They'd lose by it an' gain nothing."

"Because Puhoteke is a fool, for ane thing. An' you dinna want to for-r-get that maist o' the raids on white traders ha' been because o' the thought o' their stores. Kaiti's always wanted to get a' he c'ud for nothin'. Noo we've refused him he'll git to thinkin' he'll take what he wants. Or Minea will think for him. Though she's sma' use for either o' the brothers. There's the launch, wi' the American flag flauntin' at the ster-r-n."

Clinton presented fresh fish for the commissaries of the two traders and explained that he had been celebrating his holiday in the sport of angling. Incidentally he told of his affair with Kaiti. Harrison guffawed but MacIntosh looked grave.

"The three o' us ha' made him lose face the same day," he said. "There'll be trouble, o' sorts, br-r-ewin'."

"Let 'er brew," said Harrison. "I never trouble trouble till trouble troubles me. 'Ave a drink, Clinton? I see your flag's hup. What's the hoccasion? 'Ere's to it, anyw'y."

"Just an anniversary," Clinton answered diplomatically. "We have lots of 'em."

Where the ignorance of his British neighbors remained bliss it was sheer folly to make them wise."

"We 'ave one or two," said Harrison. "One on the ninth of this month. I'm arskin' you two over to supper — 'ow about it?"

MacIntosh supplied the question that Clinton had in mind.

"What happened on the ninth of July?" he asked. "No' that I'm lookin' askance at a geeft supper. I'll be on hand."

"What 'appened? The ninth of July, hin the year Nineteen 'Undred, is the date of the Colonial Draft Bill, mykin' New South Wyles, Victoria South Haustrylia, Queensland, Tasmania, *hand* Western Haustrylia a Commonweath; *that's* hall."

AS THE evening passed Harrison became first boastful, then boisterous over his skill at pool, lamenting the fact there was no table on which he could exhibit. And then MacIntosh, through the spiritual medium of Mr. Hollands, became the impersonator of R-r-r-ober-r-r-t Bur-r-r-ns.

At eleven o'clock, grasping the hand, alternately, first of Clinton and then of Harrison so as not to make a trio out of Burns' immortal 'twa', he half sang and half declaimed:

"We twa hae paidl'd i' the bur-r-n,
F-r-r-e mor-r-ning sun till dine;
But seas between us br-raid ha' r-r-r-oar-red
Sin auld lang syne."

At half past, when Clinton left, the Scot was declaiming with fervor:

"O, wer-re we as young as we ance hae been,
We sud hae been gallopin' down on yon green,
And linking it ower the lily-whit lea,
But wer-re na my hear-r-rt light I wad dee."

"On the twenty-feeth o' Januar-ry, the bir-r-thday o' the immor-rtal Bur-r-rns, I'll brew ye baith a Willie Waught, aye an' mak' ye a haggis, gin ye'll soop wi' me."

" 'Aggis? 'Ow'll you make 'aggis with no sheep on the hisland. 'Ow'll you get your sheepshead?" demanded Harrison argumentatively.

MacIntosh surveyed him with a full measure of scorn.

"A MacIntosh was never-r yet unable to pr-rovide for-r his guests. Mon, I'll mak' h-hic-haggis, gin I hae to use your ain heid. I'm thinkin' there's slight differ-r-rence."

Clinton made his exit.

In the launch he knew that the threatened spat had been averted. Over the waters came the sounds of amity, however misappropriate the words. It was the sentiment that counted, though the suggestion of Harrison running over a sidehill and picking daisies in company with MacIntosh struck Clinton as humorous. He had had just enough liquor to accentuate the ridiculous and stimulate imagination. He could visualize the two, one thin, the other stout, both in kilts, flitting about the daisied slope; as the song grew fainter in the distance:

"We twa hae run about the br-raes
And pu'd the gowans fine;
But we've wandered mony a wear-r-ry foot,
Sin auld lang syne."

IT WAS late afternoon in the village of Kaiti. The moist heat was sweltering, for the place was closely hemmed in by the thick and matted bush and little or no wind crept into it. It was practically deserted save for the snapping, snarling dogs and razor-backed, slate-colored pigs, rooting in the offal and filth with their long, upturned snouts.

Most of the men had spent the hot day in the little houses they had built in their garden clearings, *tabu* for the women. A few of them had cleared a little bush, cut a little timber, worked on a few garden fences, a few had gone hunting or fishing.

The women had labored hard, tilling, planting and cultivating. Now they were digging and gathering vegetables and fruit, collecting firewood, beginning to drift back to the village in groups of two, three and four. They were all heavily burdened with their yams, their firewood and whatnot in netted bags that hung on their backs from loops slung over the tops of their heads. Sometimes children were atop the load or carried in smaller bags shaped like hammocks. Some rode astride their mothers' shoulders or straddled their hips.

A few men began to appear on the platform of the big clubhouse with its floor raised on high stilts from the ground, a clumsy, irregular ladder of poles leading to a sort of porch over which the roof pole was extended, thatch-grass pendent in long fringes from it, long strips of bark cloth, painted with totem signs, hanging down. The men yawned and stretched themselves, taking no notice of the women. A young buck-dandy, shining with oily red paint, his black frizzy hair beautifully combed, a necklace of beads dangling, bands of perforated shell on his upper arms and below the knees, into which he had tucked colored leaves of the dracena shrub; a belt of bark tight-corseted, painfully indrawn about his empty stomach, a new clout of barkcloth for perineal band; proclaimed to all the village that he was courting a girl.

Probably the girl herself saw him. No one else paid any attention to him. The men on the clubhouse balcony hunkered, scratching their hair with short sticks, saying nothing, not noticing the women any more than they did the grubbing pigs and slinking dogs.

The light was fading, the sun already below the top tangle of the forest, through the gaps of which came shafts of hot and angry red light. Now more men showed, coming in idly, their toilet bags on their arms from which they extracted betel-nut and lime. A few carried pigeons or kangaroo rats. Two brought in a wild pig on a pole.

The most curious thing of all was the way in which they came on to the scene and moved about it, exactly like extras in some savage drama, who could not be entrusted with lines and who had been instructed only to keep moving. Few words were spoken at all, few glances interchanged and yet there was something in the atmosphere that charged it with purpose—something out of the ordinary, sinister.

The women passed to their household duties. They cooked for the men, but they did not eat with them. All the bachelors, and a great many of the married men ate on the clubhouse platform, others on the porches of their own houses while the women and girls, after the food was cooked, devoured it squatting on the ground or inside their homes from earthen plates and boiling pots, using shell and bamboo knives, coconut spoons, pronged forks of bone.

And every woman, as she came into the

village, as she made her fire and baked the yams or stewed the meat, turned furtive looks toward the piles on which the club-house was supported. There was something living under there, lost in the shadows, a dark mass from which there issued the stink of human sweat, the sweat of fear as much as of natural exudation.

There were twenty men there, jammed into a bamboo cage so that movement was almost impossible. They were packed as close as apples in a shipment barrel, wedged in since they were seized at dawn by order of Kaiti. All day the flies and the mosquitos had stung and bitten them, the dogs sniffed and snarled at them and the heat sapped them of vitality. They had not been fed, been given no water, and all the time the hope of living had slowly leached out of them and the growing fear of a horrible death had gnawed at their manhood. They knew that above their heads Kaiti was devising the method of their passing, if they were found guilty; that the wizard was at his incantations and would smell out the culprits at top moonheight.

There was only one among them who should really suffer for having broken the command of Kaiti. He had told his wife what had happened between the chief and Kalinitoni the white man. Rather, she had got it out of him, little by little, sensing he was keeping something from her. So the story had gone through the tribe like the savor of a succulent morsel in the cooking pots. It would not stop there; it would spread through the island; there would be laughing in the villages of Vetesi and Puhoteke; Kaiti would be mocked. Nothing, not even the wizard Puriti, could stop the arrow of gossip, any more than one might stay a shooting star.

The guilty one kept his own counsel, the others perforce accepted their fate. There was no use talking about it. Some one would be killed, perhaps all of them. There would be no more laughing and talking, no more smacking of lips over good food, no more lust or zest of life. Whoever the wizard pointed out would be dispatched to the uttermost darkness.

They were numb with pressure, faint, relaxed. Only the constriction of their quarters kept them erect. The man who had talked still cursed the folly that had made him yield to a woman's nagging, but he did it in silence, automatically as the petition of a prayer-wheel, the curse fluttering in his shallow brain.

Maybe the wizard Puriti would smell him out. He was afraid of the wizard, a man who talked with the dead, who did magic things with stones, who could kill a man by merely telling him he was going to die. But he was going to hope for the best. Perhaps Puriti would want to use the occasion to kill some one else against whom he had a grudge. Such things had been done, for Toteo knew times when the guilty had been passed over. If only he had smashed in his wife's head when she kept him awake with her worrying questions—as he had been minded to—instead of answering her.

It must not be surmised because Kaiti had a brain that could never have ranked beyond third grade, that he was a fool. Such things are matters of comparison. Even Minea was not really smarter than he was. He let her get away with things because he was too lazy to oppose her. He let her more or less drug him with *kawa* because he liked the effect of the fermented ginger-root.

But now he was stirred from all lethargy by a constant spur. He had lost face, he was a subject of jest and he knew that the chief who is laughed at is neither respected or feared. In the present situation he began to see his chance to get rid of the white men and hold supremacy of the island for himself. He had been insulted by all three of them and he would turn that to advantage by the assumption that a slight upon him was a slight upon all the tribesmen.

The first thing was to punish those who had gossiped, to devise something that would redound to his own credit, set the tribes talking so that if the wretched incident of the damaged fish or the refused trade goods and liquor ever came up it would be eclipsed by the vengeance of Kaiti. If it came to fighting, his prestige as a warrior made him the true leader. He was fat, but he was strong. He might be a great eater, but he was also a mighty fighter. He sent for Puriti the wizard.

Wizardry is a fine art. As practised by savage sorcerers it is a business that is roughly divided into three branches—religion, medicine and politics. Priesthood and healing ever go together where men are primitive. Kaiti was superstitious and it seemed as if Puriti was able to do things with ghosts to help him, but Kaiti was not much afraid of him. He knew he had his bag of tricks, knew how some of them were worked.

To have a great wizard was a great attribute to an overlord and in this he outranked his brothers who had *tahunas* of only mediocre accomplishments. Puriti could dress up his ceremonials wonderfully and he was quick-witted. But Kaiti never forgot that he, and not Puriti, was the real ruler of the tribe. Puriti was only mortal, like himself and he was not infallible. Minea was cleverer in many ways though she did not have the ancient knowledge, the art of mummery, the apparatus, handed down in the sorcerer's cult.

PURITI looked the part. He had a lean and hungry look and his face was the face of a bronze devil. Few ever saw him in daylight or without his trappings. When he came in to Kaiti he jangled with human teeth and knuckle bones, his body was harlequined with paint and save for his ornaments, and a G string of bark cloth, he was naked.

His familiar was with him, a cur that he had dyed so that one side of it was black and the other yellow, trimming its ears and staining its teeth as scarlet as his own with betel-nut. He had taught it all sorts of tricks with infinite patience and he vowed that it held the spirit of Tai greatest of all sorcerers.

It sat on its haunches beside him like a goblin at the end of the clubhouse where a wickerwork fetish stood, a hideous fantasy tricked out with feathers and fur, with sharks' teeth and a long nose tube of wicker that made it seem a combination of sea and land and sky, part cassowary, part squid, part kangaroo, which may have been the intent. On either side were mummies, the skins of dead men drawn over clay models, clay caricatures of their faces sculptured over dried heads where the hair was retained, the eye sockets filled with scrolls of rolled palmleaf, neatly coiled, hands and feet of phalanging roots, like mandrakes. Between these stood racks filled with skulls.

In the ordinary course of village life Puriti was a practitioner in sickness and witchcraft, he gave love spells and he told fortunes. He discovered stolen things. He took charge of deaths, which always came from evil influences, and fixed the responsibilities. He was ballet-master of the mystic dances. He had many neophytes of his own and he presided over the ceremonials whereby boys entered manhood. And for all of these things he collected his perquisites and fees.

But where Kaiti's person was concerned, his safety, his dignity; Puriti was the politician pure and simple. The diplomat. The grand vizier, his own interests subordinate to those of Kaiti. He knew, of course, for what he was wanted, but he was not sure of all that was in Kaiti's mind.

He had small doubt of discovering the guilty man. The actual means he would employ were based upon detective principles. He had his spies and stool pigeons and he was depending a good deal upon Minea. Like the French crime investigators Puriti believed in seeking the woman in the case. He knew how to handle women. They believed that he could cause them to bear male or female children, cripples or stillborn, as he pleased; that he was arbiter over their souls before life and after death; that, if he willed it they might see their dead babies again after their own death.

Once he found out who was guilty, or who Kaiti wanted found guilty, he would go ahead with the ceremonial, with the tricks in which he delighted, while the people gasped in awe at his wisdom and power.

Kaiti's face was like a thundercloud. His stomach was sour and his head ached but he was not drinking. He did not intend to drink again until the white men's liquor was his. Then——

The two sat in silence for a while. Kaiti chewing betel-nut and lime paste, spitting copiously into a calabash whose contents would be carefully guarded and destroyed lest some one possess himself of them and bewitch the chief. Even Puriti could not prevent such a spell.

"What is in your mind concerning this matter, Puriti?"

The wizard felt his way, watching Kaiti's face.

"It is better to punish one or two than to destroy twenty who are good paddlers and fighters. This comes in my mind.

"The twenty all deny this thing though they believe they will be thrown to the sharks. Such was the threat of Kaiti."

"I have changed my mind about the sharks. I have a better thought. One would not be missed where twenty would.

It is true. Perhaps only the one knows who is guilty."

"The others would not tell if they knew. The fool talked with his wife. All gossip comes from the women. Let Minea talk with the wives of these men as I shall instruct her. Let them be brought in one at a time. She will ask them who has started this idle talk about the king."

This was sheer flattery, but Kaiti's eyes gleamed and Puriti lowered his own lids to hide the light in his own. Kaiti meant to use this affair for the fulfilment of his ambition. It marched with Puriti's. The greater the might of Kaiti, the greater his own, the fatter his fees.

"You think the women will tell?"

"I think that nineteen of them will give the same name and that the twentieth will give another—or none at all. For Minea will tell them that if the truth is not told they will all surely die. They and their men. Men like to live, but they do not fear death as women do. They will tell or, if they do not, Tai will smell them out."

The goblin hound whined, hearing its name. Kaiti looked at it half fearfully. If Tai could find out why question the women? But he did not ask that. He could never come quite to the point of testing Puriti. He might be able to talk with ghosts.

"So be it," he said. "I will speak with Minea."

"Let her tell each woman that if she speaks of the matter to another her tongue will be fed to the pigs. As for the woman who gives no name or gives one different from the rest—which she may do, having spite against some other—she is not to be held but to go free with the rest. The drums will sound at moonrise. When the moon is over the village we will find the ones who have flouted the king's wish."

"So be it. You are wise about women, Puriti."

"I have many wives."

"So have I. Sometimes I think too many."

Kaiti sat glowering. Puriti wrapped his lean arms about his bony knees and hugged his thought. If Kaiti made away with Minea he would not mind it. She was too clever. If Kaiti's mood was worked upon he might smell out Minea some day when the chief was sick from overeating. Without Kaiti's private sanction it would be too risky. Even as Kaiti the warrior, was a little afraid of Puriti the thinker, so the sorcerer was a little afraid of the fighter and his moods of anger. A man's skin was so little a thing to hold his blood; so easily pierced, so hardly mended.

IT GREW cooler as it became dark. The cooking fires burned low, but others were appearing, many under the houses and some on the platforms, to keep at bay the mosquitos. The tribesfolk began to sit around these in groups, still comparatively silent compared to the usual chattering, the chanting of songs and the inevitable beating of individual drums. There was a good deal of smoking, sharing the smoke-filled cavity of a bamboo pipe that was charged with coarse native tobacco made into a cartridge with a leaf wrapper. One sucked out the air and let the pipe fill with fumes, a little of which he inhaled, passing the tube around until it had to be recharged.

There was expectancy in the air. All waited to see the moon show from behind the jagged peaks to the east. There was glow there already, the planet would be high when it topped the range.

Aside from the first passion of lovers, the suckling time of children, the half superstitious regard for babes who died before they were able to talk and walk, there was little true affection among them, none that was not completely offset by the prospect of Puriti's dramatic spectacle, the excitement of their own participation in it, the smelling out of a victim and the spilling of human blood. Friendship ceased with clan protection in time of mutual danger. The immediate family of the victim would mourn long and loudly, but wailing was a mechanical action that took place upon all kinds of occasions: Birth, marriage, death.

They were all creatures of the moment, reactionaries to primitive instincts. Kaiti and Puriti dominated them because of their ambitions, their pride of race, the fact that their ancestors had been chiefs for many generations and had actually lived on better food. Minea, too, was chiefly bred.

A brush charged with silver seemed suddenly swept across the top of the forest with its dense undergrowth and great half-smothered trees. The moon wheeled up revealing the outlines of the houses more plainly, the circles of nearly naked, crouching savages, the groves of gigantic palms about the village borders and in the central open space.

It revealed the hard-trodden level of the *sing-sing* ground where a dim fire burned between great hollowed-log fetishes in front of a mammoth banyan tree whose buttressed boughs showed cavernous, with here and there the moving glint of a torch between the columns that upheld the big branches and sent down roots to anchor.

Here were the dressing-rooms, the green room, the wings of Puriti and his assistants. One of these came out to a drum, carved into the semblance of an elongated face with a tongue hanging out of the grotesque mouth and a black bird with outstretched wings perched upon the top of the skull. He swung a mallet against the cylinder with all his might.

Wham-m-m! The sound was dull at first, close to. There was a long slit, a soundhole in the log. With the succeeding strokes, the high vibrations renewed by the powerful blows before the first series had subsided, the concussions seemed to explode in mighty booms, like the firing of a big gun. The drummer seemed to warm up, to attune his instrument until it trembled, sensitively vibrant. Then he began to send in code.

In the village they listened to the announcement while their pulses beat in rhythm, so that they were creatures of the drum, without volition, timed to its beats, swayed by its momentum, controlled by its messages.

Boom-boom-boom! BOOM! BOOM-boom-boom-boom! BOOM! BOOM!

The savage phonetics, the wild wireless of the tribes, pounded on. It began with the clan call, told briefly of the nature of the entertainment and its purpose and extended a hearty invitation to Puhoteke and Vetesi. It suggested that the occasion concerned all of them, as Kaiti was minded to have it considered. He meant to have a talk with his brothers afterwards, to heat the iron and strike while it was pliable.

The women would not come at nightfall, nor would the warriors, if it had not been moonlight, for fear of evil spirits lurking in the narrow bush trails to seize them. Few of them would try to return that night and, as the island was fraternally owned and there was no real friction between the three divisions, this could be done without danger of a raid.

So the villages of Vetesi and Puhoteke read the message and, as it ended, roared back their acceptance. Clinton heard the drums and so did MacIntosh and Harrison, the two last together on Harrison's veranda. All three knew it for code-sending though none of them could read it. In the light of recent events, they wondered whether or not it should be considered ominous. They could distinguish it from the monotonous tom-tom of the dance tympans, from the raucous bellow of the devil-devil drums that proclaimed war.

The twenty prisoners heard it in their cage, the sweat drying on them with the night air that was not low enough in temperature to discourage black clouds of mosquitos that attacked them. There was no smudge fire for them. Overhead they could hear the shuffling feet of their fellows who presently would see them go through their ordeal. Now their vitality was low from the exhaustion of the pressure and lack of food. They were ready to die, to welcome any sort of delivery from the cage.

None was allowed near them, their women least of all. Nineteen of these, knowing that they had given the true name of the gossip, were hopeful of escape from trouble. The twentieth, half deceived by Minea's imperturbability, made yet more dull her childish brain by chewing a narcotic root. She went with the rest of the village to the *sing-sing* ground when the moon stood over the village palms, taking a little comfort from her seeming immunity.

To have taken her prisoner would have belittled Puriti's ceremonies. She did not realize that she was watched by the nineteen who considered her hostage for the safety of their own men. The condition of a widow was not a pleasant one and they were not minded to enter upon it unnecessarily.

The voice of the drums changed after the messages had been acknowledged. As the moon lifted they seemed to attain a fiercer, more insistent note, droning at times and then blaring like great organ pipes.

The villagers moved toward the *sing-sing* ground, men and women smeared according to their individual fancies with red, yellow and black paint, with lime mixed with pig-fat, tricked out with feathers, with armlets and anklets, with necklaces and disks of pearl distending their earlobes, with strips of bone thrust through the septa of their flat noses.

The men carried their spears and some of them took skulls from their personal racks in the clubhouse. The women had peeled wands, carved and painted. There was to be a preliminary dance in which all would join before Puriti took the stage. Each dressed for the part much as a boy might deck himself with odds and ends for playing pirates or Indians. This was play to the tribesmen, the killing that would come at the end of it merely incidental, unless—and their mouths watered at this thought—unless the victims were to furnish their own funeral meats, and long-pig be baked in the ovens. The last was doubtful, no orders had been given to fire the pits.

Through the corridors of the bush there came in single file Vetesi and his warriors, Puhoteke and his men, the files converging as they threaded the maze of trails—Melanesians all, of medium stature, their skins plum-black where the paint showed them, their hair bleached fawn and ocher, ornaments jingling and twinkling under the moon. Their bodies were powerful, but their faces asymmetrical, primitive types.

Between the root pillars of the banyan Puriti crouched, knees drawn up, his hands clasped about them. His costume was not yet donned and he squatted motionless, unmindful of the thrumming of the great tympani, the people coming into the enclosure. Such matters were handled by his subordinates. He waited his cue, star performer of the evening.

TIME had rolled back its scroll twice ten thousand years. It was the Stone Age.

The moon, serene, that had seen so many things, smiled with its dead face, soaring high above the *sing-sing* ground, where the soil was beaten flat, hard as cement by generations of dancing feet. The place was walled in by the bush, held back but ever moving, growing in all directions save where the tribesmen hacked and burned it; giant trees fought by strangling vines, thorny underbrush, a fury of vegetation. Only the great banyan stood out from the forest. The firelight blazed high and the shining bodies of the dancers, dripping with sweat from the flames and their exertions, reflected the crimson blaze and were touched by the moon rays as with a calcium.

The men pranced to the thunder of the drums where Kaiti sat throned on a carved log. They advanced in rushes of mock war, shaking their spears and shouting. They killed imaginary enemies and gloated over them, showing their heads on the lance-points, the white skulls bobbing. They formed in a phalanx, bent double, knees high as they stepped, chanting, exploding in a final roar of triumph and upflung arms.

All the time the women shuffled, shuffled to the tempo, leaning on the peeled wands. Their faces bereft of visible emotion, mere masks of stupidity; thir gaze, fixed, held in the hypnosis of rhythm.

With the warriors it was different. Their emotions were roused and lusts loosed, lusts of fight, of murder, of blood, summoned by the drums. Quicken that rhythm a little and the men would wheel and rush to seize the women. Quicken it yet more and they would go wholly mad, their little reason breaking like glass vibrating at too high a pitch.

Now they were more brutes than men. Manlike beasts, hairless apes, excited to cruelties that jungle law would never brook.

Now and then the women broke into the chant with two whining measures given flatly, automatically. Then came the bass of the men, howled with full strength of their lungs as they brandished their spears and held their trunks curiously stiff on the prancing legs—going like pistons. The bull-roaring bellow of the drums; the shrill note of panpipes.

Suddenly silence!

The neophytes of Puriti came out, masked like birds, with long cloaks of grass set in rows, like thatch, on barkcloth. They cleared the enclosure before the log-fetishes of the dancers, gave instructions here and there, marshaled the women in a crescent and made them hunker down on one side, the men on the other.

Kaiti, still as a statue on his long throne, his musket-scepter in his hand, now leaned forward a little and spoke briefly to Vetesi and Puhoteke, seated to right and left of him. His heavily jowled face was bestial, his eyes glowed in the firelight like carbuncles.

Though the pounding of the drums had ceased, the air seemed still full of humming vibrations. The women were coming slowly out of their semi-trance. Among them were the twenty who were the wives of the paddlers. These last were hustled on, roughed by their escort, stood up in a faltering line where they stared straight forward, their faces twitching, striving for control over their numbed limbs. Anything but an upright, immobile position might provoke the wrath of Kaiti.

After the little confusion of their entrance, silence held again that, after all the clamor of the drums, was more impressive. As it lasted even Kaiti became uneasy. He set down his musket and fingered nervously a javelin of hard wood, heavy almost as iron. The butt was carved and barbs had been filed at the point with pumice friction. The tip itself was of obsidian. It was a beautifully balanced thing, a king's weapon, and the polished shaft had been soaked in hot blood scores and scores of times.

There came a flutter of sound, the swift patter of hands upon conjurers' drums, shaped like golf-bags, of light wood hollowed by hand and fire, funneling-in slightly from both ends toward the middle, the mouth covered with lizardskin, with a handle that was part of the main drum. Panpipes and flutes shrilled a minor strain, over and over again, weaving through the sound-fabric of the fluttering drums. The big drums had left the air palpitating, stirred in a maelstrom.

This music seemed to come from nowhere and from everywhere at once. It murmured in the trees, from ground level and from the high branches, it made the blood creep and jump, the eyes to strain into the shadows that moon and fires could not dissolve, black, mysterious patches that looked as if they might be the gaping mouths of pits, entrances to the underworld.

Then, in a space that had been blank a pulsebeat before, an eerie creature appeared. It looked a good deal like the fetish-god in the clubhouse come to life. Beyond doubt, many thought it was. There was the squat shape of wicker covered with cassowary feathers, with wallaby fur topped by the head and the tubular snout, or tentacle. The wizard's arms were bound with flexible wings, extended as he skimmed silently here and there, soundless, to the plaint of the crepitating drums and the shrilling reeds.

The eyes were disks of shell fastened into the wicker frame of the mask, the nacre curiously lifelike, holes bored in the center through which Puriti surveyed possible victims. Lifelike too, the pliant trunk that seemed to be smelling out the guilty.

The figure disappeared at last between two drum-logs to the left of Kaiti and his brothers. Almost immediately Puriti made entrance to the right, panting a little from the dance and the quick change, for which he had been underdressed. Now, as when he had talked with Kaiti, he was practically naked, harlequined with paint, strung with teeth of sharks and dogs and men, with knuckle-bones; a girdle of old men's beards about his middle. His face was the face of a devil. No mask could have discounted that fiendish countenance. He carried a small bag of netting and the dog-goblin Tao trailed behind him. He stalked down the line of prisoners twice, his malevolent eyes peering into theirs.

"Who," he cried in a shrill voice, "who has spread abroad slanders concerning Kaiti? Who has dared to lie about Kaiti? All men deny it yet the words were spoken of man."

When he paused the dog, watching his master narrowly, its ears cocked, considering every intonation, threw up its head and let out an ululating howl. A shudder went through the onlookers. Tao had spoken.

"It is easy to smell out a liar," went on Puriti, "for in his mouth is corruption. Let us find this man that Kaiti may decide his punishment."

He stooped and seemed to talk to the dog who listened and gave two barks before he trotted to one end of the line of men, staring down at it with eyeballs that projected, with slack jaws, each giving a deep sign of relief when Tao, after one look into each face, one back at Puriti, passed on.

Opposite the eleventh man the dog came to a direct halt, sat down on its haunches and uttered the long-drawn howl. What signal he may have caught from the wizard was not noticeable.

"Is this the man, O Tao?"

The howl was repeated.

"So, Tikipo, what have you to say in the matter?"

Tikipo knew that no word of his could avert his doom. He read that in the sneering eyes of Puriti.

"I have spoken no lies about Kaiti," he said stoutly.

Puriti grinned at him. Tikipo was to die for telling the truth, but that was not to be acknowledged.

"The dog dislikes me," said Tikipo. "He stole meat from my house and, not knowing it was Puriti's dog, I threw burning wood at him."

"Is that true, O Tao?" asked Puriti solemnly and all the audience looked at the fantastic hound which turned its back on Tikipo and, yawning, walked away. There were nervous laughs at this yet none doubted that Tao lived again in the dog.

"So. We will make another trial," said the wizard.

He passed to each man round objects that he took from his bag, passing swiftly along the file, dropping one after another into their outstretched palms.

They were *tuti* nuts, candlenuts, almost as hard as ivory, but they had been painted red and the twenty paddlers were under his spell, the spell of their own position from which they were not yet definitely delivered, for it was likely as not, to their thinking, that Kaiti would order them all killed and eaten. They listened and obeyed as men do in hypnosis.

"Let us see how strong you are," said the mocking voice of the wizard. "He who is guilty will not be able to crush what he holds in his hand for his spirit is already made weak by the spirit of Tao, which has spoken. Hold out your hands at arm's length. Squeeze!"

HE COULD see, and Kaiti could see with his brothers, and those closest could also see, the sudden, strenuous efforts that made the muscles swell in the forearms of the paddlers, muscles made big and stronger than the ordinary by their calling. Beads of sweat, wrung hardly from those overwrought bodies, stood out on their faces as they strove to crush the nuts. Strove and turned gray with despair.

One man's eyes lighted for a moment. Tikipo. The thing had crumpled in his palm. Its contents suddenly oozed out between his fingers and Puriti laughed while Tikipo looked with dismay at the white stuff with which the wizard had filled the nut he had palmed off on Tikipo after he had extracted its contents and before he cemented the edges of the shell again. There were no other nuts so filled. He laughed again and the dog barked and Tikipo knew he was trapped.

"Lo," said Puriti, "the liar strove the hardest, as I knew he would, and his guilt is plain."

He caught Tikipo's arm and thrust it upwards with the white mess smeared all over his palm. A great exhalation went up from the crowd.

"Take him," said Puriti "and hold him before the chief."

He did not call Kaiti king before his brothers. He guessed what was afoot, the destruction of the white men, and he was glad, for once Arisoni had laughed at him and Makinatosi had ordered him off the place one time when he found him talking with his laborers. Kalinitoni was the chief offender against Kaiti.

"Now," said Puriti, "Tao has told me that the wife of this man has gossiped—therefore is she the more guilty since Tikipo spoke but to her and it was she who has spread the lies. Let Tao speak to us."

He called to the dog with some quick gesture that made it stand up on its hind legs, manwise, proof of the metempsychosis to all present.

"Speak, Tao," demanded the wizard. "Was it Tutila who spread these lies?"

The woman named, wife of one of the paddlers, gasped. The dog sat back on its haunches, forepaws hanging but made no sound. One after another Puriti named the wives until he came to the name of Tikipo's woman. The dog howled and leaped into the air. Puriti called it, covered its muzzle for a moment with his palm, in which was a scrap of the woman's intimate garment, taken from her house.

"Go—smell her out," he ordered and the brute raced towards the shrinking women, snuffing at them as they cowered, barking at last in front of Matiti, wife of Tikipo.

The ordeal was ended, the punishment about to begin. Both were taken before Kaiti who rose from his seat, his javelin in his hand. He gave a brusk command and the men held Tikipo and the woman, Matiti, while another forced open their jaws with a hardwood wedge and still another cut out their tongues and flung the reeking morsels to Tao who leaped and caught them in midair, bolting them avidly.

"So is Tao fed, upon the tongues of those who speak falsely," said Puriti.

Now the man, maimed and tottering, was left standing alone. There was a sound of indrawn breath, a craning, a sigh of satisfied brutality as Kaiti drew back his arm, the javelin poised in his clutch and then, with all the force of his mighty arm, hurled it.

"Eyah!"

It was a mighty stroke. The smooth tip entered. The barb, set backwards, bit into the flesh as the shaft passed on—through—and the spear fell clear to the ground beyond the toppling body of the paddler.

Then a thing happened that only the mind of a fiend could have conceived. A stout length of wood was brought, two feet long, tapering like a marlinspike, a long lanyard of sennit reeved through an eye in the thick end. The woman's wrist was bound to the lanyard and the spike was thrust through the wound made by the spear, enlarging it to a passage through which Matiti's left arm was hauled, emerging smeared with the smoking gore of her mate, who still breathed, crimson froth filling his tongueless mouth. Her wrists were lashed together, the living embraced the dying.

"Set them on the platform of their house," said Kaiti. "And let the house be *tabu*."

IT WAS the evening of the ninth of July, the anniversary of the dating of the Colonial Draft Bill, the inception of the Commonwealth of Australia. MacIntosh and Clinton were the guests of Harrison. So far the affair had not been a success. There were many reasons for that.

The night was hot, muggy, exhausting. The land wind had failed to materialize at sunset. The barometer was jumpy and the air surcharged with electric fluid. It crackled in their hair, in the frizzy mops of the houseboys. It upset their physical equilibrium and emphasized the uneasy feeling of danger that was shared by all of them, engendered by four practically sleepless nights.

For four nights the great drums had boomed up in the bush, not dance-drums, nor code-drums, but deep bellowings of the biggest logs, the devil-devil drums that meant mischief. Nor had these waited for moonrise, but had throbbed from first darkness until an hour or so before dawn. They meant dances indeed, but only those calculated to work up tribesmen into a frenzy of bloodlust, they meant propitiatory sacrifices and blood-rites before the war-idols and the evil spirits so that warriors might adventure at nightfall and know the demons were on their side, lulled by the prospect of later votive offerings.

Vetesi had sent a messenger to Harrison, warning him of the threat of Kaiti to wipe out the white men. He had said that Kaiti had wanted him to join in the raid, but that he had refused because he was friendly to Harrison and also—though he did not specify this—because Tuni, his wife, had advised him against this thing.

Moreover, Puhoteke had come in person to MacIntosh and, in veiled but meaning talk, had said much the same thing. The canny Scot had sent him away with gifts. Clinton had not been warned. So far Harrison and MacIntosh had not brought up the subject.

Racial traits held them back from being the first to show alarm, but the thing brooded. Since twilight all of them had listened for the drums and silence had not been reassuring.

The dinner had been almost spoiled by the frightened cook. There was no chanting from the quarters where the boys of all three were gathered. Clinton had only a few helpers—divers and cleaners of shell—and he had brought all of them along. MacIntosh had fetched a boatload and the rest had come over of their own accord in canoes, proof of their fearfulness.

Harrison was pretty well ginned-up when his guests arrived and he had proffered drinks freely and hospitably ever since. There was a bottle for each man, and a houseboy brought young coconuts as they were needed. Clinton's bottle was barely touched. MacIntosh indulged sparingly—for him—and the host himself drank intermittently and gloomily. There was no ice; the coconuts were none too cool. The stimulation from each swallow of liquor brought a reaction that was too much like a swift touch of fever to be pleasant, and induced perspiration, which was copious enough without urge. Their whites were patched with sweat.

After the meal, out on the broad veranda, MacIntosh and Harrison peeled coats and shirts to their singlets and lay back in long deck-chairs, smoking, drowsy for a while after the heavy food and the toasts they had drunk. Clinton was touched with the same sleepiness of digestion but something warned him of the necessity of keeping awake. He had taken off his coat before dinner. Somehow or other the decidedly undress costume of the others annoyed him unreasonably.

MacIntosh, long and skinny, scratched

himself. Harrison, with his singlet open, showed a hairy chest, with bright blue silk suspenders that he called "braces," embroidered in wild roses, tugged at his mustache. Some girl had worked them for him, he had told them more than once. Clinton believed that a falsehood; that Harrison had bought them for himself. Blue—baby-blue and pink roses—for Harrison! The sight of them irritated Clinton almost beyond control and he refilled his pipe, trying to soothe his nerves. He had never known he possessed any, but now they were jumpy. Tobacco lacked solace; it burned his tongue, the pipe was foul. The best thing was to clear out, go home, but that would be deliberately rude and, even if he didn't like Harrison, he had accepted his invitation. Besides ——

He caught himself listening for the drums. There was only the sound of the surf crashing on the reef, muffled by the heavy air. It was the rotten weather that put them all out of sorts.

The veranda was screened against mosquitos, but careless houseboys, holding doors open, had allowed in some of the pests, and there were a lot of fat green houseflies who made persistent sallies, buzzing and biting. Harrison, slapping at one, began to tell again, for the fiftieth time, the story of his winning of the pool championship, with infinite details.

"So I chalked my cue an' took my time about it."

MacIntosh lay with his eyes looking up at the porch ceiling, motionless as if Harrison's windy yarn was a lullaby. Clinton watched a hairy, fat fly swing down and light in the middle of a sticky flypaper where several of his fellows had already given up the struggle against the stuff that held them fast in its viscid leashes, wings, legs, bodies. The fly had been bothering him and he saw its doom with a grim satisfaction. He imagined Harrison in some such mess and his sense of humor returned at the imaginary picture, chasing away his grievances, much of his irritation. He grinned, and Harrison, coming to the end of his story, took it for friendly endorsement and grinned back.

"Reg'lar scorcher, ain't it. Brewin' up for something or other, I'm betting. Eh, Mac? ——, it's 'ot! Too 'ot to play cards, too 'ot to run the bloomin' phonygraph. Too 'ot to drink."

He swatted viciously at a fly and missed it, bawled for a houseboy.

"You bring more those paper-catchum-fly," he ordered. "Savvy? Plenty bring."

The boy went away, Harrison laughing as he disappeared.

"I—he savvies all right. You know what —— fools they are. First day I broke 'em out of stock, the flies 'ad been drivin' me balmy. I 'ad 'im lay 'em out. 'E got all stuck up with 'em. Both 'ands. 'E tried to git one orf with 'is teeth an' it got glued to 'is map. Came out to me, fallin' over everything. Thought 'e was bewitched for fair. They're the only things that'll keep the flies down. Yankee invention, too, Clinton. Give you credit. You can't chase the beggars out. Come up through the cracks in the floor, I wouldn't wonder."

"Got many of them?" asked Clinton. "The papers I mean, not the flies. I wish I had some at my place."

"You can. I've got plenty. Ordered a dozen an' some —— fool clerk sent me a gross. Charged me for 'em, too. Personal account. If it 'ad been anything I wanted special 'ed 'ave left it out altogether."

Clinton noticed the houseboy as he brought back the package of fly papers and unpeeled two of them. His skin, usually sooty black, had lightened beyond imagination. It was actually gray, the pigmentary cells had undergone some actual change, like a chameleon's. It stood for fear. Of what? A storm—or the drums—Kaiti?

Clinton did not have much respect for Kaiti, but he realised that, unintentionally, he had made him lose face, had offended him more than Mac or his host. Kaiti and his tribesmen could make things very unpleasant to say the least of it. The three of them, with their guns, might hold off a rush, kill enough of them to turn it into a retreat. But an attack *en masse* would be no joke. The Commonwealth of Australia might own the island but Kaiti did not know that; the three whites were, after all, only there on tolerance, through friendship with the natives, plus the natives' fear of the white man's superiority—his guns, the quality of his *mana*, his spirit.

They couldn't fight the whole island. Fighting at all would mean at least the halting of business. One could not, for instance dive for shell and rot it out along a beach that backed up to an impenetrable wall of jungle used as an ambush by the tribesmen who alone knew the secrets of the trails.

Brains must fix up the trouble. If he had got them into it it was up to him to get them out, to use his wits. Idly he watched the fat fly giving up the struggle as Harrison jawed on:

"A chap told me the flies in the trenches was orful, 'orrible. Worse than bullets, 'e said. Way 'e told it, you c'ud fairly see it. Buzzin'. Day an' night, so they wished winter 'ud come back. Spoilin' the grub. Buzzin' in the dugouts so you cudn't sleep. Stingin' an' drawin' blood. Bold as 'ornets. Lightin' on the dead men before they were cold. Clouds of 'em. 'Ummin' an' feedin'. Layin' eggs!"

There it was, the war again. And neither of them had been in it. Clinton had, and he wanted no second-hand descriptions. Besides, he knew what that topic of conversation would lead to. Harrison would boast of the Australians and their prowess and Mac would brag of the doings of the 'Ladies out of Hell.' Fair enough, if it didn't lead up to disparagement of the Americans, the inevitable introduction of the phrase "too proud to fight." the suggestion that America had carpet-bagged the misfortunes of Europe, prospered on the spoils of war.

Clinton felt he couldn't stand anything of this sort tonight. Sooner or later Mac always got sarcastic about prohibition and profiteering. There was a lot of it that rankled under Clinton's hide; he resented criticism from outsiders. He knew the two regarded him more or less as an interloper, that, if he had been after copra instead of pearl shell, their friendship, such as it was, would be turned to open enmity.

They figured him as an intruder upon British territory though they had never actually said so. But, after all, he was exploiting the shell that an Australian partner had uncovered. Pearls and pearl shell were like gold—where you found them. Nothing to do with national boundaries.

But he wasn't going to get into a row. No sense in that. Only it was a farce, the three of them pretending to like each other's company. It was just the inevitable chumming of white men in the savage islands.

"If it 'adn't been for Wilson and 'is Fourteen Points," said Harrison, "we'd 'ave chased the —— krauts clean to Berlin. As it is they don't know they're licked. Why ——"

Clinton fought down the emotion that urged him to slap Harrison's face, to challenge him to a fight, to lick the stuffing out of him. It wasn't just Wilson; they were running down America again and——

Boo-oo-ooo! Boo-oo-ooo! Boo-o-o-o-oo!

THE night was instantly hideous with the discordant, mocking blare that seemed to rip the hot air apart, to penetrate their skulls and strike their very brains with harsh notes like hammers. It was more than just sound, somehow; there was a savage, compelling challenge there that stripped the peel of civilization from them and made them primitive, hairy, naked men with stone axes in their fists, standing on the brink of a windblown cliff where their women and children were lodged in caves; waiting for the assault of their tribal enemies who so insolently announced their coming. The three white men looked at each other, clear-eyed, linked in the emergency that was going to be thrust upon them. Blood-brothers in peril.

"Conch shells," said MacIntosh. "They'll no use those if they dinna mean business. 'T is Kaiti. Two hundred warriors back of him. Twa to one against his comin' here first. I'm thinkin' he'll be visitin' you, Clinton, maist likely."

"They'll not find much. I buried my shell yesterday. And most of my stores. I had a hunch something might come off when those drums started, five nights ago. My men felt the same way and they've had experience in these islands. They're good men—come from the Tuamotus—they'll fight."

"That's more than some of my lot 'll do," said Harrison. "They'll funk it. So will Mac's outfit. Scared stiff already. That beggar Puriti, Kaiti's wizard, 'as got them goin'. They know this bush crowd are cannibals an' the idea of bein' stuffed an' baked in the ovens don't appeal to 'em. You say you've buried your stuff, Clinton. Just the same they'll burn your shacks. 'Ear them conches go again? They're way up the mountain yet. You say so an' we'll go over to your place an' give 'em a 'andsome reception when they show. What price that, Mac?"

MacIntosh nodded and got up.

"We'll hae to teach them a lesson," he said. "Micht as weel do it there as here."

Clinton shook his head. They meant it. Gin-drinking Harrison and canny MacIntosh stood ready to take the chance of leaving their own places unprotected to save his shacks. He warmed suddenly to them.

"Good men," he said, "but I haven't got much to lose. If they came here to Mac's place and found it unprotected they'd burn up your groves as well as loot the stores. Coco-palms take seven years to get to bearing. You can build a new shack overnight. They won't get my shell. I buried it after dark, below tide-reach. Nothing to show the place.

"You are the nearest to me, Harrison. They'll come on here next. It's my fault. I pulled a grandstand stunt on Kaiti and a worse one when I offered him that damaged fish. Ignorance of law and custom's is no excuse wherever you may be. I've got you into this and I wish I could get you out. It's not going to do any good to fight, the way I look at it. You can't kill them all off and you're bound to leave them sore if you win the scrap. If you lose, there's no argument. I don't begin to know as much about islanders as you fellows, of course."

He turned to MacIntosh. The Scot nodded again.

"Ye're largely richt. We got Kaiti sore by refusin' him what he asked for, but he'd ha' got ower that. Mebbe he'd ha' got ower your offerin' him the feesh an' takin' back the shell-hook, but I'm no sure. Ye ken he lost face on't. An o' his men talked aboot it tae his wife an' she spread the gossip. I got this frae Puhoteke. Kaiti, an' that —— Puriti, wi' his headwife Minea, who's the worst o' the three, killed the man an' his wife. Just hoo, Puhoteke wouldna' say, but ye'll ken it was no a quick death. Then he tries to get Puhoteke an' Vetesi to join wi' him in killin' us three an' loootin' our stores.

"Just why they wouldna join him I'll no pretend to elucidate. But I'll guess at it. Island politics. Kaiti wants to be king. As it is Vetesi an' Puhoteki ha' an equal share. Wi'out doubt they ken his intentions. In fact I'm sure they do, forby I've talked wi' them about it, an' so has Harrison."

The Australian assented.

"Tuni, that's Vetesi's top wife, told me."

"So. If they wad help Kaiti to get rid o' Harrison an' mysel', who are friendly wi' Puhoteke an' Vetesi, it wad be that much easier for Kaiti to get rid o' his brithers later on. They can see that. So can their wives. But ye'll tak' note that, whiles they said they were not wi' Kaiti and warned us there micht be trouble, they didna say they' would tak' sides wi' us against Kaiti.

"If we sh'ud kill Kaiti or any number o' his men, I hae my doots, an verra strong anes, whether the friendship o' Vetesi an' Puhoteke wad be able to protect us from raids even if they wanted tae. Ye ken the whole isle's related an' bluid's thicker 'n water."

"'E's right," said Harrison." "You never can tell when they'll round on you. That's the whole 'istory of the islands. You can pal up with a chief for a year or two an', all of a sudden, something 'll 'appen that 'e'll blame on you—or 'is wizard will—an' then, if you don't step lively, there's another prize 'ead in the clubhouse. Mine 'ud make a fine exhibit, on account of my gold teeth.

"I've seen Puriti lookin' at them a dozen times. 'E'd like to string 'em round 'is neck, 'e would. Mac's right. Lick Kaiti an' you'd 'āve to lick the lot of 'em sooner or later. A row now 'll spill the beans, if there's any killin' to amount to anything. And I reckon there will be before the night's over. Just the samey, you can't knuckle under to Kaiti an' 'and 'im everything 'e asks for on a gold plate."

"I didn't think it wad materialize as soon as it has," said MacIntosh. "Usually they'll beat drums for twa weeks, but those conches mean business. They blaw them to keep the kelpies an' demons off the trails. We meant to warn ye, tonight, Clinton. We talked it ower an' decided we'd ask ye to stay wi' ane o' us till the thing's worked oot. As it is, they've happened to catch the three o' us in ane place, thanks to Harrison an' the Ninth o' July. It's here they'll be comin' next but they'll no be here for a few hoors. We'll ha' time to prepare for them. I brought plenty of ammuneetion wi' me in case we might need it. We've guns enough an' if Harrison's got any dynamite, we can fix up some short-fuse bombs an' mak it verra interestin', verra interestin' indeed."

"I'll get the dynamite an' we'll over'aul the guns," said Harrison. "What about the boys, Mac? Clinton, you say your's can fight. 'Ow about shooting?' If they can't aim a gun it's no use chuckin' away ammunition. We may need it all before we're through, this time an' the next."

"We'll bring the boys in," said MacIntosh. "They'd slaughter them i' the quarters. But I'd na bring them richt awa. 'Twil just scare them the more. We'll hear them comin'. They be *booin'* wi' the conches, frichtenin' the bush demons an' hopin' to frichten us at the same time."

There was a flicker of lightning, a ragged levin of fire that licked about the ramparts of a great mass of cloud it partly revealed, out of whose bulk came a low muttering of thunder.

"If the storm comes i' time it' may stop the raid" said MacIntosh. "But that'll hae to come sooner or later. There'd be na sense in tryin' to deal wi' Kaiti. He'd just think we were afraid o' him."

They went into consultation of war. Harrison's house was two storied, built against the slope of the mountain, one big room on the ground floor with a porch outside, unscreened, which was the floor for the veranda above. On the second floor the earth had been excavated for foundations and there were several rooms.

Stairs from the upper veranda, practically a living-room, led down at either end to a flat terrace and garden. The rooms were well shuttered.

Assault would in all probability be made simultaneously from below, where the porch roof, that was also the veranda roof, would shelter attackers from a downfire of the white men's weapons; and up the two flights of outside steps. They would sound their conches until they gathered in the palm grove and then they would come with a rush that would have to be stopped. Dynamite at too close quarters would wreck the house, but they had to chance that. There was the danger of fire, and buckets were filled against that risk which MacIntosh did not seem to think much of.

"It's *us* they'll be wantin' " he said. "Wi' oor bodies as pairfect as possible. 'Gin they get us they'll mak' a feast o' us. They conseeder the hear-r-rt o' a white man a verra str-r-rengthenin' thing, to say naught o' other selective por-r-rtions o' his anatomy. An' there's oor heids for their mur-r-ral decor-r-ations. Harrison's bonny teeth. They'll na want to r-reesk spoilin' their spoils wi' fire."

He spoke with a grim sort of jesting. The excitement of the situation had affected the burring of his R's just as liquor did. But Clinton's viewpoint of these two suddenly clarified. He had been irritated with them all evening, had always despised them a little when they talked of the war in which they had been non-combatants. Now he knew that they must have been out of it for no will of their own. Soon they were to face a savage horde of maneaters with such tremendous odds that it did not seem possible they could win through. Much of the affair could be blamed to him and they made nothing of it as they discussed the best defense and coolly went about preparations.

He was well aware that he was an outsider so far as Puhoteke and MacIntosh, Vetesi and Harrison were concerned. Neither of the chiefs cared anything about him, had anything to do with him. He was out of their jurisdiction and they had had no dealing together. They did not consider him any protection against Kaiti's schemes for their downfall. They might be well contented enough to let him be killed and looted, and he saw that Kaiti would recognize this, would know why his brothers had not joined in with him.

It was not impossible to imagine a peace made with Kaiti in which Clinton would be the scapegoat. These two white men, Saxon and Celt, of his own race, would never consider such a contingent. He was one of them, and they held no rancor because he had been the primary cause of Kaiti's declaration of war told by the conches they no longer heard. Doubtless the raiders had gone to his place where, as he had said, they could do no damage that could not be replaced with comparative ease.

The lightning was now showing more frequently, but the glares, like the great wall of cloud they revealed, seemed still far off, without much strength of illumination on the island. And there was no wind, might not be any until after the thunder storm had broken. Then, perhaps with rain, a gale might relieve the sweltering conditions.

Harrison came from downstairs, a few sticks of low explosive in his hands, a disgusted look on his face.

"I was afraid I was low," he said. "I ordered enough, to come this larst trip. Told 'em I wanted it special for planting an' widenin' up the reef gap. Do they send it? They don't. Send me a gross of —— packets of flypaper but no dynamite. Five sticks of low grade is all we've got."

He cut the greasy rolls in half, short-fused them, capped them, split the fuses and inserted matchheads. There were cartridges on the table and now they overhauled their rifles.

Three of the Tuamotu divers were fair shots and they planned to bring them on the veranda. If possible the rush must be stopped before they made the head of the steps or battered in the door below. There was only a limit to the time in which they could fire. And an empty gun was an indifferent weapon against the clubs wielded by savages. The gravity of the situation was not to be underestimated.

A houseboy came in with his face twitching with the news he brought. A crimson flare in the sky to the south, that they could not see from the veranda. Clinton's shacks burning, what trade he had left unhidden being looted.

"It means they're just that many miles away," he said with a shrug. "Can't get here for three hours, anyway."

"But they'll come," said MacIntosh. "The nicht's young yet."

* * *

IT WAS not a pleasant vigil after all had been done that seemed necessary. The news of the fire had spread to the quarters and the men were brought into the protection of the house. Outside they could put up but a feeble defense against the blood-mad bushmen, fresh from the firing and loot of Clinton's place, wild with finding themselves balked of murder. The white men must protect them, except for the last assault, the last desperate rally that might be staged. The odds were not a thing to be discussed, even thought about.

Harrison ordered more gin brought in, but MacIntosh refused.

"I've been drunk a few times i' my life," he said, "but should I gang oot this trip I'll prefer to go sober. You'll shoot better for not takin' too much, Henry."

"You may be right, Duncan, my lad, but, if we pull through, I'm going on one ——orful bender. 'Ow about you, Jim? Or will you 'ave a little snifter now. What's the idea of bein' so serious?"

"I was wondering," said Clinton, "if there was no other way out of this but shooting and bloodshed. At the best we'll only turn 'em back and, in the long run, we'll be lucky to get away to sea and leave your plantations."

"Looks like it," admitted MacIntosh. "What would ye suggest? You come from a nation o' inventors. Ye've Edison an For-rd. Necessity is the mither o' invention, they say. Yankee Jim, noo's the time to prove American genius."

It was not said sneeringly. There were no sneers between them now, but a common understanding, welded on the forge of trouble.

Clinton sat smoking, idly watching a fly that had lighted on the border of the sticky paper. Five feet were clear, the sixth had got caught in the viscous stuff with which the paper was smeared. It tugged and buzzed, but the sticky mess held it too firmly. At last it lifted a foreleg in the effort, lost balance, set the foot down beside the other, tried to free that, fell over enough to entangle a gauzy wing.

They were pretty well trapped themselves, he reflected. The only sure safety would be in flight, abandoning everything. None of them was of the stuff to do that lightly, and there was no wind for Harrison's schooner. The floodtide was running. They could not get away if they wanted to. The fly collapsed, held more securely than in a spider's web. Its struggles had only sealed its fate.

"There is ane way ye micht get the best o' Kaiti," said MacIntosh, "and only ane. And I dinna see a chance o' accomplishin' that. Aside frae oor refusin' him what he asked—and it's no the first time he's been refused, for every time ye gie him aught he wants more—the trouble has come aboot because Jim Clinton made him lose face i' front o' his paddlers.

"Now, if something could be done to him in front o' his whole tribe, or more o' them than he could punish, ye ken, something that would mak' him rideeculous; why that 'ud settle it. Laugh at a leader an' he's a leader no langer. If it could be fixed to include Puriti, we'd have no more tr-rouble wi' Kaiti or his outfit. Puhoteke an' Vetsi get alang well enough wi' each other and us. Aye, i' Kaiti could be laughed oot o' court, so to speak."

"As it is the bloomin' joke's on us," said Harrison.

"I'm not so sure. I've got an idea," said

Clinton. "I think it 'll work. If it doesn't we're no worse off than before. It's bound to have some effect, if the storm doesn't break. If the storm does come hard enough it may stop the raid anyway, as Mac says. But we'll try this dodge. Listen."

They listened, half incredulous at first then with increasing attention. Finally Mac slapped his bony knee and Harrison guffawed out loud.

"Jim, ye're a Yankee genius," said the Scot. "Ye've got a guid heid on ye."

The sound of conchs *booed* faintly in the distance.

"We'll 'ave to 'urry," said Harrison. "I think the storm 'll 'ang over for a bit. Ow 'll we tackle it, Jim?"

"You take one flight of steps and Mac the other while I get to work downstairs. Let's go."

THEY turned out all the lights as the conchs came closer, then ceased; and sat in the darkness, their weapons set handy, knowing the tribesmen were gathering in the coconut groves, getting ready for a rush. The heavy cloud wall had come in closer, as the intermittent lightning showed. Thunder muttered and growled, but the mass of vapor seemed a barrier holding back the storm that presently must break through.

The heat was terrific, but they did not mind it. It conduced to the efficiency of Clinton's scheme to make a laughing stock of Kaiti and turn his attack into failure.

It was a nerve-tingling job, waiting for the assault to materialize. It seemed for a while as if the attack must have been abandoned, and all the time the lightning flared faster and more vividly, the thunder sounded like great guns battering at the black citadel. A moaning sound seemed mingled with the pounding of the reef, but there was no wind.

Breath was hard to manage, as if they had been in a vacuum. Every little while the trembling lightning flashes would winkingly reveal the scene, weirdly tinted, as if they gazed at it through purple glass or as if it was a stage setting under purple calciums. The weird light held just long enough for the eyes barely to adjust themselves and begin to take in details, before all was black again, impenetrable.

Harrison was the first to see them, breaking out from the palms just as a flash came.

"'Ere they come," he whispered. "If your scheme don't work, Jim, we've got to stop 'em before they get to the 'ead of the stairs."

"It 'll work. Better take stations."

Clinton was suddenly confident, cool, certain of his plan. The next flash showed the savages running towards the house, bounding along, their painted faces fiendish in the brief glare, their weapons shaken as, from brazen throats, there suddenly issued a blood curdling yell, calculated to stop the very heartbeats of the men they supposed were sleeping, unawares.

Kaiti was at the head of one bunch that made for the right hand stairway. Puriti led for the left. Others rushed for the space below the veranda. They bore with them logs for battering rams.

Kaiti leaped for the steps, his men close behind him. His feet landed in something that slid slickly under him, that clung to his soles. He lost his balance, fell asprawl, his followers in a momentary confusion that rapidly increased to panic. Kaiti's hands were glued now to squares of stuff that he could not shake off. There was one of them on his face, clinging there, flapping a little as if alive, persistent as a vampire bat. More on the side of his body where he had slipped. He pawed to get rid of them and accumulated more. It was some white man's magic.

All about him his men were struggling, sliding, shouting in alarm at this silent attack that had materialised with such appalling swiftness. Their weapons were thick with the glue, their fingers stuck together, it was in their hair, their eyes; clinging, hampering, blinding.

On the other stairs the same calamity had come to pass. Under the veranda, men squirmed in confusion, catching at each other, dropping the battering logs, patched all over their arms when they sought to retrieve them, pulling each other down, mad with the knowledge that some frightful sorcery had laid hands upon them.

A livid gash of flame appeared in the very center of the storm cloud that now seemed just beyond the reef. A shattering blast of thunder seemed to pour through the gap with a sulfurous taint on the wind that rushed into and passed the breach. Simultaneously came the roar of broken vapor-vacuums, a second fierce glare of levin as the gale leaped to the land, bowing the palms and rushing up the mountain.

It did more than that. In the glow of the lightning it set all the loose ends of the flypapers fluttering where they were not cemented to the bodies of Kaiti, Puriti and all the warriors, now changed into frightened children, what few wits they had utterly flown, knowing only they were bewitched by these things that had suddenly flown at them, magic things that were sapping them of all the strength and courage.

They were bewitched! Puriti with the rest. And Kaiti. Doubtless there was poison in the glue.

They bolted headlong. Men fell and were trampled upon, scaled with the awful things, rolled in them. Wherever one man clutched at another or strove to beat off these demons—surely they were demons—they found themselves in greater distress.

Again the lightning came and the thunder crashed and the wind blew, fluttering the papers. The terrible gods of the white men had risen in their wrath. Puriti and Kaiti led the flight, if it could be dignified by such a name, towards the grove, flypapers sticking to every part of their anatomy while their men came flopping and flapping and floundering behind them.

The three traders stood in their grandstand, shaken with laughter as the electric fluid flamed and showed the ignominious defeat and flight. They rocked with mirth and were powerless. If weapons had been needed they could not have used them. Clinton had a fleeting idea to fire a volley above their heads and then realized it was far better as it was.

There had been no personal sign from the white men at all, only the enveloping flypapers strewn thickly on the steps and under the porch, thanks to the gross of packages shipped in error. Then the timely bursting of the storm, the coming of the wind; all supernatural; all plainly the work of the gods.

THERE was no laughter in Kaiti's broken ranks, but when they reached the village the spectacle they would present at daybreak would be sufficiently ludicrous. The women would have to scrape off the sticky mixture and all that had adhered to it. It would take days to get it out of their hair. Kaiti nor Puriti could never reinvest themselves with dignity. They were utterly finished.

Now the rain came, crashing down, flooding the trails up which the crestfallen tribesmen made their way amid the fury of the storm that thrashed the great boughs of the forest and broke them off and flung them at the miserable creatures that crawled like ants in a flood, discredited, defeated.

The rain clattered on the roof of Harrison's house, but the three traders did not heed it.

As dawn slowly sifted in through the slanting lines of rain they stood in a triangle with arms folded, the right hand of Clinton clasping the left hand of Harrison and his left the right of MacIntosh; who were similarly interlinked in mystic fashion that the houseboys, staring through the doors, knew for magic ritual.

They saw the white men lift their folded arms together then lower them with a sudden jerk to the rhythm of the strange chant they sung, in words that beach English did not furnish. Surely it was a great charm that they practised. What a fool Puriti had been, Kaiti had been, to think they could prevail against wizards like these.

"Now," said MacIntosh, "ance more and a' together-r-r.

"Should auld acquaintance be for-r-got,
An' never-r br-rought to min'?
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For the days o' auld lang syne."

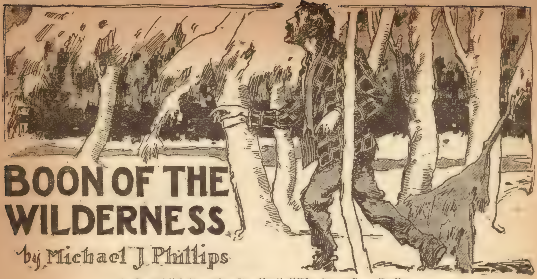
"Ye ken," he said when the charm was ended and he filled the glasses, "I'm the auldest o' the three o' us which gies me the richt to speak fir-r-st. Lang syne oor forebear-r-rs were a' leevin' on the same bonny isle, forebye there's par-r-ts o' it far-r super-rior-r to ithers. But let that gang. We're o' ane kin yet. Let's dreenk to the race."

They drank.

"One good drink deserves another," said Harrison. " 'Ere's to Jim Clinton, Yankee, inventor and genius. Jim I'm proud of you. Next Fourth of July, I'm 'anged if I don't fly the Stars and Stripes from my flagpole. And the ninth, too, to celebrate what 'appened to night."

"I'm wi ye in that," said MacIntosh. "Noo, Jim, 'tis your turn."

"To the three of us," said Clinton. "The three traders of Jijilap."



BOON OF THE WILDERNESS

by Michael J. Phillips

Author of "A Freudian Feudist," "The Stage Goes By," etc.

"DINKY!" Buck Cadger's voice rose in a roar. "Dinky!"

Dick Farrell, rechristened "Dinky" by the foreman, came hurriedly from the kitchen. He wiped his hands nervously on his apron. Cadger leaned back from the slab table to glare at him. The half dozen men of the crew, gathered at leisurely Sunday breakfast, grinned.

"What the —— kinda flapjacks do you call them?"

Cadger poked at the pile of cakes on his plate. Under his huge thumb the skin of the top one scuffed, showing the sticky batter beneath. The cook answered with just a flash of spirit.

"Well, you couldn't wait. You kept riding me to hurry."

Cadger threw the cakes into his face. They struck with a slushing sound and left a streak of batter along his jaw. Young Farrell recoiled a step or two. His fists doubled.

The foreman pushed back his chair.

"Don't you like it?" he asked with a mean grin. "You can settle it, you know, in a holy minute. Outside or inside. Well?"

Dick's eyes wavered from the pale blue orbs of the muscle-ridged foreman. They were fierce and pig-little. He could not meet them long. His look traveled about the walls of the log house and dropped to the floor. His fists loosed themselves.

"Afraid, hey?" jeered Cadger. "Trouble with you is, Dinky, you're yellah. If you was a man you'd 'a' fought long ago or got out."

Young Farrell winced at the words.

"You don't like to think of gettin' out, hey?" went on his burly tormentor. "Well, I guess you'd starve if you did. You was about the sickliest-lookin' bum I ever see when you came here beggin' for a job. Looked as if you hadn't eat for a month.

"Goin' to stand there all day?" His voice changed to a terrifying bellow. "Go cook me some cakes. And if they ain't done you take that lickin' anyway."

Dick shuffled to the kitchen.

The foreman glared about the table. Some kept their eyes on their plates. The others gave him truckling grins. They knew and feared his unreasonable anger.

"Sloppiest cook I ever seen," he snarled. "If I could find a better one I'd cuff this thing into the lake."

They ate in silence until Dick came back with the platter. Cadger pulled one of the cakes apart and looked at the smoking edges. He grunted as much in disappointment as in approval and dumped three-fourths of the stack on his plate. Then he poured on hot bacon grease and molasses. The man at his left, first making sure the czar required no more, took the rest.

Breakfast finished, the gang, getting out fenceposts and railroad ties on the John Garland tract along Clearwater Lake in the jackpine country of Michigan, drew forth pipes and cigarets. The first match still flickered when the front door burst open.

A fat young man with a soft face gasped and stammered before them.

"Why—why—" he began.

"Say it!" barked the foreman.

"The old man—Mr. Garland's gone!"

"Gone?" With uncouth quickness the foreman got to his feet. "What do yuh mean, Webb?"

"He's gone, I tell you. Lost. I don't know where or how long. Maybe a couple hours."

With a wicked oath Cadger hurled himself at Webb. His fist came over in a roundhouse swing and the other went down on his back, his head in a corner. He struggled and sat up, his mouth cut and bleeding.

"You're a swell nurse, you big, fat, lazy slob!" roared Cadger. "Nuthin' to do but watch a crazy man, and you let him get away from you. Where'd he go?"

"I told you I don't know." The frightened Webb wiped his mouth with the palm of his hand. "I heard him about daylight. But he didn't make much noise and I dropped off to sleep again."

"You're always sleepin'!"

"I supposed he was all right. He's been wild to get out these four-five days, but it's been so cloudy. He hates the dark. I guess he was tickled it was fair. You know, the only word he can say is sun."

"Come on with it!"

"Well, when he saw the sun, I guess he just dressed himself and went, to be out in it."

Cadger wheeled to the table.

"What you sittin' around like a lot o' dummies for?" he demanded. "Tumble out and get to lookin'. He ain't got no more mind than a baby. If we don't find him he's through. We're on the edge of forty miles o' bad lands. Hitch up the horses. No, pile inta the truck. I'll take the flivver."

"Hadn't you better find out where to go?"

The question came from the cook, standing in the doorway of the kitchen, a plate and wiping cloth in his hands.

"Sa-ay!" The foreman stepped threateningly in his direction. "Ask fool questions, will yuh? Have I got to stop and knock yer teeth out?"

"It isn't a fool question," the slender Dick answered, placatingly. "But we don't know which way he went. He could get an awful start in two hours. Let me call central and spread the word. Maybe somebody has seen him."

He turned to the telephone screwed to the logs beside the window and turned the crank.

"Oh, hello," he said, soon. "Is that you, Carrie? Say, Carrie, this is Dick Farrell, the cook over at Swede Landing. Mr. Garland, the lumberman, is lost. Anyway, we think he is. Yes. He left his shack a couple of hours ago. What? Wandered off. You know, his mind is a blank. Will you ask everybody, downtown and all, if they've seen him? Yes, please. I'll wait."

He stood by the phone, the receiver at his ear.

"I'm foreman around here, you ——!" growled Cadger. "If there's any more telephonin' to do, I'll do it. You get gay and I'll sock yuh one yet. Get busy!"

This last he roared at his men, and they hurried out. Webb returned to the Garland cabin a few yards away, patting his injured mouth with a handkerchief.

"Hello," Dick resumed. "Yes, Carrie. Hank Prouty, over by the Three Sisters—pretty early this morning. Uh-huh. Got a drink of water. Prouty didn't see which way he went? Thank you. Don't you believe we better call the sheriff and rout out the settlers? That's fine, Carrie. Thanks, a lot. We'll go right over to Hank's."

As the cook turned from the telephone Buck Cadger's hands closed on his throat. The foreman squeezed cruelly, until the younger man's breath died in his windpipe. As tall as Cadger, he lacked weight and muscle, and he struggled uselessly. Just this side of suffocation Cadger flung him against the wall.

"Once and for all," gritted the venomous foreman, "am I boss, or ain't I? You keep yer lip out o' this, or I'll just about kill yuh!"

BUCK CADGER rode to the foot of Three Sisters ridge in the camp errand car. The other men except Dick went over in the truck, two draft horses clumping unwillingly along behind. The cook rode Nancy, a fairly good saddler. The winding two miles of sand road were soon covered.

Already the settlers streamed into Prouty's yard. They knew, although the warm sunshine caressed them and the sky beamed a friendly blue, that caprice ruled late autumn in this northern latitude. Rain or snow might start in a few hours with a killing drop in temperature. They must act quickly before exposure and hunger did their work on the lost man.

Some came in two-horse wagons, others in single buggies, the rest on horseback. A number carried rifles and wore filled cartridge-belts. In the pine barrens, shots are invaluable for signaling. The newcomers exchanged sober greetings with the men already arrived, and fell into low-toned conversation.

The cook from Swede Landing dismounted, tied his horse to a corner of Prouty's log barn, nodded diffidently to those nearest, and slipped away into the underbrush at the foot of the ridge. He climbed the steep path, veined with roots and slippery with fallen leaves, to the summit. He came out on the crest of the easternmost hill and stood kneedeep in the brown-tipped vegetation that rippled in the gentle breeze.

A splendid sight met his eyes. The ridge is higher than it looks, and dominates the country. Dick had taken a telescope from the Garland cottage before starting. Now he swept the horizon, searching for a moving red dot in a vast expanse of brown and green. John Garland wore habitually a crimson stocking-cap. It would stand out clearly enough against this background.

To the north Clearwater Lake sparkled and dimpled in the sunlight. To the south rolled an uninterrupted ocean of emerald, olive and reseda, with a rare frost-turned small maple like a pillar of flame on its bosom.

The Manistee hills guarded the southwest. On their side a great yellow scar showed where a forest fire swept bare the earth. To the west another green sea of vegetation flowed at last between parallel ranges in the far distance.

East was the smudge of the town of Rainbow, with the screened dome of a sawdust burner, two church spires and formless blotches which were houses. Southeast, a tiny streak crawled northward, the morning passenger train from Chicago heading for the Straits of Mackinac.

Over all lay a blue haze like much-thinned smoke. Dick covered the land inch by inch with the glass until his eyes smarted. But he saw no moving red dot. He folded the glass and went down the ridge. As he reached Prouty's yard, a stout young man with a small black mustache rode up in his car. It was Mel Houghton, deputy, and son of the sheriff.

"Where's your dad?" brusquely demanded Buck Cadger.

"Away up in the north end of the county, other side of the big swamp," replied Houghton. "He's running down that killing at Mound Clearing. Worst of it is, he has the dogs. And he can't get back today. Maybe not tomorrow."

The foreman laughed offensively.

"Dogs? Say, Houghton, them bloodhounds ever find anything or anybody?"

Houghton smiled.

"Buck, those dogs know more than you do."

He went to where Hank Prouty stood in the center of a group of his neighbors. The cook from Swede Landing unobtrusively followed.

"Yes, I saw him," Prouty, a little man with a much-wrinkled face was saying. "Early, it was, right after sun-up. He had one o' these knitted red caps on and a Mackinaw. I went out to feed the team and noticed him on top o' the hill, lookin' off to the east. Came down after awhile. Got a drink of water from the well and sorta wandered off. Didn't say anything when I spoke to him. Seemed friendly enough."

"Which way did he go?" asked the deputy.

"I don't rightly know," confessed the settler. "The old woman called me in to breakfast and I didn't see. I asked him if he wouldn't have a bite, but he smiled and strolled out. It seems to me he went around the other end there and headed back toward Clearwater."

The lake road divides on the north side of the Three Sisters. One branch goes southeast to skirt the buttes, the other turns west to a settlement lying a mile away behind a jackpine grove.

Dick Farrell edged off in the direction the settler pointed. He scrutinized the sandy track. After several minutes he returned to the main group. It had been joined by Cadger. The foreman, at home in a shirtsleeved crowd, where he achieved a sort of popularity, dominated the talk.

"Believe me, I handed that slob of a Webb somethin'," he declared. "If that bird hadn't been lazy as an Injun', this'd never happened. He knew better than to lay abed."

The cook plucked timidly at his sleeve.

"Say Buck, Mr. Garland had on those shoes you bought for him, didn't he?"

The foreman turned with a scowl.

"Don't bother me."

"Didn't he?" persisted Dick.

Cadger drew a long and baleful breath as his eyebrows came together.

"Have I got to bump yah yet?" he demanded.

"Can't you answer his question?" coolly asked the deputy sheriff.

Cadger looked from the cook, who seemed to grow small and insignificant under his stare, to Mel Houghton and back again.

"Well, what if he did?" he grunted, noting that the others by their attitude, seemed to demand an answer.

"What was on the heels?"

"Say, who do you think you are? There was a half-moon of steel and about four brass-headed nails on each side of it."

"Come on over here," urged Dick to Houghton.

He led the way to the west fork of the road. There, outside the wagon track in the sand a line of footprints showed. The heel mark, a semicircle at the back with dimples on either side, clearly revealed itself. Houghton followed it until the tracks lost themselves in the wilderness.

He stared over the rusty green plain.

"He'll veer to the left," he said, thinking aloud. "Lost people always do. They take a longer step with the right leg. He'll come on around a circle. But we don't know how big it will be. Maybe five miles or ten or twelve. If he lies down, that stuff'll hide him." He nodded to the sweet fern and bracken, which grew tall and thick. "If he gets hurt or tires out, we couldn't see him till we fell over him." He returned to the Prouty yard.

"Mr. Garland started west from the upper end of the ridge," he began, raising his voice. "Any of you see him?"

They did not answer, and he went on:

"He's out of his head, you know. Not crazy, but just lost his memory. Can't think. Just like a two year old kid, except that he's strong and all right in body. Or was. But he'll veer to the south. We'll have to cover every inch of that out there—" he waved his hand to the wilderness—"to make sure he hasn't hurt himself and can't get up. He wouldn't know enough to yell."

"Looks to me we'll have to do some skirmishing. Suppose we line up about twenty feet apart. Those with horses, I mean. We'll form a line with the left resting on the road. We'll go south for a mile, say, wheel around with the right as a pivot and come back across. See what I mean?"

SOME murmured assent. Nearly every man under thirty present had been in the world war. They understood. He addressed himself to the older men.

"Plow a mile-long furrow, thirty horses or about six hundred feet wide. We keep on plowing back and forth until we find him, or until dark. The cars can chase around wherever there's a road, and search all the empty shacks. You fellows afoot can telephone away off to the west and south. And make sandwiches and coffee at the cottages and bring 'em over. Guess we can spare a team for that."

"If we don't find him before night, how about a bonfire on the Three Sisters?" suggested Dick. "And that other hill off to the southwest? If he came to his senses——"

"Good stuff," agreed the deputy. "Four of you fellows look out for that. You stick with me, Farrell. I want a horse. Who's going to let me have one?"

Immediately a settler brought a big bay forward. From the brisk movements of the men, it was apparent they approved of his plan and were anxious to get to work. Many of them had learned on deer-stalking trips or in searching for strayed cattle how deceiving were the barrens, how many folds and valleys cut those tricky plains. Some had taken part in manhunts before. They knew how vital was haste.

"Just a minute," commanded Buck Cadger importantly. "Guess you people know this ain't no pauper's job. Mr. Garland's a rich man. When he comes to his senses—doctor says that'll be before very long now—he'll see the finder's well paid. Whether he does or not, his wife'll take care of it. She'd be here now, only she's sick in a hospital downstate."

"Let's go," said Houghton.

They formed the long line. At the end of the first mile swath they talked it over. All felt the space between horses could be increased by half. They could see farther than the deputy had anticipated. Taking the new distance, they patrolled back and forth, farther into the wilderness. Without result until just before dark. Then a shout from the upper end of the line brought them galloping recklessly through bramble patches and over fallen trees.

Against the side of an abandoned railroad grade Hank Prouty's eyes caught the tassel of the lost man's cap. It was all but buried by fingers which patted it in with the nicety of a child who plays alone. All about were finger marks and tramplings.

"Stayed here for an hour, I'd say," remarked Prouty, as Houghton dismounted. "Wasn't scared or worried. Laid down there—" he pointed to a scooped-out place in the sand—"and had a little sleep. Wasn't hurt. Wasn't hungry or thirsty. Just havin' a good time. Buried his cap like a kid and went off an' forgot it."

The settler looked about, studying the grade, the broken ferns, marks which were as print to his experience and went on.

"Came here a little after noon. When he started off again, he went quick and strong, as if he knew where he was goin'. That way."

He pointed to the southwest where the setting sun touched the horizon between the twin ranges of hills. He turned to his colleagues.

"Ain't that right?"

"You bet, Hank!"

"You've figgered it out."

"That's just the dope."

They agreed with hearty promptness.

"Well, come on!" It was Buck Cadger, blustering as usual, who spoke. "Let's go find him. We're losin' time."

Prouty shook his head.

"No use. Can't do anything more tonight. If he went straight, and we knew it, we might foller him——"

"With the bloodhounds," broke in Houghton.

"Well, yes, with the bloodhounds," agreed the settler, in spite of Cadger's sneer. "But if he started to wander again, no chance. Got to wait till daylight. Sun's gone."

As he spoke the great shield, turned crimson, vanished except for a fragment. Dusk and the chill of the north came down. Prouty followed the footmarks. But soon he gave up. Grassy turf formed above the mold of a fallen pine. All signs were lost.

"Tomorrow, boys," said the deputy. "Right here. Early."

Disregarding his own slow and bulky mount, Buck took the reins of the Garland saddler from Dick, and put his foot in the stirrup.

"Here, what you doing?" remonstrated the cook. "I've been riding him."

"I ride him now."

Cadger halted in the act of mounting, invitation in his manner. The others expectantly waited. But after a moment Dick dropped his eyes, shambled to the broad-backed sorrel and climbed aboard. Somebody laughed. Physical cowardice is not condoned in the barrens. Then the group broke up, each riding his separate way. As he plodded toward Swede Landing, successive prickly waves of shame swept over Farrell's thin body.

Beacons burned on the hills during the night. All the searchers were back early next morning, all and more. Other volunteers came as news of Mr. Garland's plight spread by telegraph over the state. Again they wheeled back and forth across the barrens, working to the south and west. But they found nothing.

THE search did not absolve Dick Farrell from his duties as cook. When the Swede Landing men rode into camp in thick darkness, they had nothing to do except wash up and smoke and grumble over their delayed supper. Dick cooked it, urged on by the constant pelting of oaths and filth from the foreman. It was eight before the last voracious appetite was satisfied. It was nine and most of the gang were snoring in the bunkhouse before Dick finished the dishes and made preparations for breakfast. He sat down then in the comforting heat of the kitchen stove. Outside, a fine rain had begun to fall.

He felt gloomy and depressed. He knew they regarded him with contempt because he had not stood up to Cadger. Besides, Mr. Garland's fate preyed on him. He had never seen the lumberman before drifting here; had never heard him speak. Yet Garland's face was likable, even under the blur of the aphasia. It was too bad. There wasn't much hope now, after two days. This rain was pretty sure to finish him.

A hurried knock sounded on the door. Dick threw it open. There stood young Houghton, raincoated, bracing himself against the uneasy tugging of two heavy-shouldered beasts, the bloodhounds.

"Get me something the chief wore—his gloves," directed the deputy, eagerness vibrating in his voice. "Wrap 'em in paper so they'll hold the scent."

"The dogs! You going tonight?" breathlessly inquired the cook.

"Sure am. Dad's just back, dead to the world. I borrowed me a horse over at Pryde's. Where's Cadger?"

"Here. What's wanted?"

The foreman in his stocking feet entered from the bunkhouse wing. He slipped his suspenders over his flannel shirt as he came.

"Get your horse, Buck. You and I are going out after Garland."

Cadger scowled.

"In all this rain?"

"You bet you!" There was grimness in the deputy's tone. "This kind of a rain keeps the scent. But the wet makes it hard to handle the dogs."

"Let's split it three ways then," cut in Dick, swiftly. "I'm in on this."

"Fine!" agreed Houghton.

Dick ran to Mr. Garland's cabin and came back soon with a pair of gloves, well wrapped in a newspaper. Also he brought two thermos bottles in a leather case. The parley at the door still went on.

"I don't see the use," the foreman was grumbling. "Them dogs can't track him after forty hours. There ain't a show in the world. And in all this rain. We'll ketch our death of cold. He's done for long ago."

"Do you want me to say you refused to go?" The plump jaw of the young deputy, thrust out at Cadger, seemed hard as stone. His little mustache lost its air of foppishness. "This fellow's a man," thought Dick, to himself.

The foreman cursed over his shoulder as he turned to the bunkhouse.

"Oh, I'm comin'!" he snarled.

"I'll drive your flivver over," Houghton told Dick. "You saddle up. Cadger can ride my horse. We'll start from that place we found the cap. I think I've got the dope."

"With you in a minute," promised the eager cook. "I'll make some coffee and sandwiches. If we find him he'll need 'em."

Soon they were off. The car twisted along the sandy track under the expert hands of Houghton. The dogs rode in the tonneau. The horses jogged along after.

"All —— foolishness," growled the ill-tempered foreman. "Needle in a haystack is a snap alongside o' this. What show we got? Why, there ain't more'n one chance in a million of stumblin' on him."

"But there is that one chance," Dick pointed out, as mildly as possible.

Buck's reply was to curse him.

"It's this way," began Houghton, stepping out of the car. It stood beside the road in the shadow of the Three Sisters. "I've been thinking what this nurse told me about Garland gives us the clew. The chief was crazy about the sunshine. Wanted to be out in it all the time. While the sun shone, he was happy. The only word he's learned to say, since this aphasia took him."

"Was sun. Well, what of it?" interrupted Cadger. He shrugged his shoulders, partly to fight the chill which struck through his Mackinaw.

"Everything," returned the deputy. "He's been following the sun."

"Say, how do you get that way?" sneered the foreman.

"Well, he was fond of the sun. Prouty saw him first looking toward the east, early in the morning."

"What was he doing all forenoon, then?"

"He forgot it in playing around. But when he started, after he'd lain down to rest, he thought of it again."

"You're nuttier than he is," jeered Cadger.

"We had a man at Camp Sevier during the war who escaped from the hospital. He was delirious after an accident. He did that very thing. Headed right toward the sun and kept traveling. He didn't travel in a circle. Garland hasn't either."

"How do you know?" broke in Cadger.

"We'd have found him long ago. No he's traveled right away from us. So I think it's a good bet that——"

The foreman cackled disagreeably.

"Dream on!"

"Everything else has failed," replied the deputy. "All right, boys, shake 'em up."

He spoke to the impatient dogs who lunged into the dripping growth of the barrens. He guided them to the west.

"Here we are," presently he announced.

His flashlight threw its beams on three burned pine stubs forming a triangle close to a weed-grown railway grade. They recognized the place. Here the lost man buried his cap in the sand.

Houghton took from under his coat the package Dick had given him and unrolled the newspaper. He held the gloves to the noses of the dogs until they ceased sniffing. Then, of their own will, they began to cast about. Seeing they were hampered, Houghton separated the leashes. He handed one to Dick who had dismounted.

The animals grew intent. They worked in circles, nose down, coming back baffled to the patch of raw sand which was the starting point. Twice more Houghton permitted them to sniff the gloves, which they did with a grave air.

"Them overgrown pugs is bluffin'," observed Buck Cadger. "Pretty nearly ready to go back and get dried out?"

Houghton did not answer.

The dogs went farther afield, raising their heads to point into the thin rain, or to lunge through the sodden undergrowth. It was Jerry, handled by the deputy, who at last found the scent. Whining excitedly, he started off to the southwest at a rolling trot. Tom, his companion, dragged Dick after him.

"He's on it!" cried Mel Houghton.

They went unhesitatingly for some distance. Cadger led the spare horse.

Young Houghton brought his impatient dogs to a halt.

"We're on our way," he announced. "And they're showing my theory is right. Here, Farrell, you get on that horse. I'll buckle 'em together. It's easy now. Conditions are just right."

"Can you handle the two of them?"

"Sure. When they pull my arms loose I'll call on you fellows. All right, boys, shake 'em up!"

They moved briskly in single file through scattered jackpine groves. Then came a valley of wild cherry. The hardy little trees lashed them with winter-bared limbs. The dogs did not falter or turn aside. They trotted steadily to the southwest, noses down, straining at the leash. The men took turns, two riding, while the third endeavored to keep up with the tireless hounds.

Cadger grumbled loudly as he dismounted for his first trick.

"Them mutts don't know what they're doin'," he complained. "They'll take us off into the bad lands a hundred miles from nowhere and lose us, too, if we ain't careful."

He jerked the leash from Dick's hands, and contrived to step on his toes as he did so.

When they had been on the way for three hours, Houghton called a halt for lunch. In the poor shelter of jackpines, while the soft rain beat insistently on them, they ate a few sandwiches and swallowed steaming coffee.

As they went on again they heard a mighty *Whoosh-whoosh* and a crashing in the brush.

"Old buck deer," observed the deputy.

The dogs gave tongue. The hollow, bell-like tones echoed across the barrens. They challenged in angry voices some time later at a distant bark.

"Wolves!" cried Cadger, almost triumphantly. "Now what chance has he got?"

"Bunk!" Houghton spat the word out contemptuously. "A wolf is the biggest coward that ever lived. They'd run faster from him that he would from them. Wolves never thought of jumping a man unless it was winter and they were wild with hunger."

The scent led across a slashing, recently burned over. Here lay the skeletons of logs, which caused dogs and horses to stumble. The darkness slowly became luminous, though thick as ever. They could see in a ghostly sort of way where they were going in the sodden barrens. Evidently a dull moon rose behind the cloudbanks.

Next the interminable sweet fern again, slowing the dogs with its tangles. And then Houghton exclaimed, as water splashed under his feet—

"A cedar swamp, and they're going right into it!"

They stopped in dismay. The dogs whimpered. Houghton cast the beam of his flashlight about. It revealed a trap of gaunt trunks with short, spiky branches, standing and lying in every conceivable position. The down trees were dark above from the rain and white underneath with a livid, unhealthy color. In places they lay four deep with dangerous spaces between, spaces that ended in moss and muck and stagnant black water. There were tufts of coarse grass on little hillocks that promised a firm footing, and lied in their promise. As far as the flash showed the dreary waste extended.

"Now will you listen to me?" demanded Cadger. "He went in there and drowned himself. That's all there is to that. We can come back here tomorrow and fish for the body. It's in there——"

"I don't think so," Houghton interjected. "Seems to me this nurse told me he was afraid of the water. Isn't that so, Farrell?"

"He did say that," replied Dick.

"Let's try something."

The deputy turned the bloodhounds to the south and dragged them along the edge of the swamp by main strength. They were reluctant to leave the scent. But within a dozen paces they sniffed, whined eagerly and were off at a steady pace.

Duck Cadger's smouldering dislike of the expedition burst into open rebellion. The going grew harder. The rain found crevices in their clothing and chilled them. Their legs ached. A man scarce settled himself in the cold comfort of the saddle before decency urged him to offer himself again. Except Cadger. Always he waited until Dick, in a voice flat with fatigue, called to him. Then he responded reluctantly and with oaths.

When, the swamp at last behind, the cook halted and said, "Come on, Buck," he replied violently, "I won't do it, yuh yellah four-flusher. You ain't walked ten rod."

"Yes, he has," snapped Houghton, who noted how the slim figure swayed ineffectively against the tugging of the dogs, "He does a longer hitch than you."

"Well, he'll double it this time. You ain't goin' to make the goat out o' me."

"You won't get down?"

"No. Not till he's walked a ways farther. There's a blister on my heel."

"You big quitter!" Houghton gritted his teeth.

He slid from his horse and took the leash from Dick. The cook struggled feebly.

"No, no, Houghton, it isn't your turn."

"We must go on," returned the deputy shortly. "Get up on that horse."

THE contempt of the deputy acted as a spur to Buck. Little distance was covered until he called for the leash.

The soaked and weary procession went on. The rain purred and slithered upon them. The dogs no longer fought the restraining hand, though they kept up a good pace. The scent remained strong, they showed no hesitancy.

Dick slept, bowed in the saddle until his head almost touched the pommel. He rolled from side to side with the plodding step of the horse. His bones ached to their marrow. His muscles seemed to have shredded away, leaving the raw nerves bare to the pitiless storm.

Cadger jerked back the dogs and stopped.

"Come on, Dinky," he commanded.

There was no answer.

"Say, tryin' to keep me walkin' all night?"

The cook stirred, but did not waken.

The man dropped the leash, seized Dick by the heel and threw him from the saddle. Houghton turned his horse and reached out a hand to prevent, but too late.

"What's the matter with you, Cadger?" he growled. "The kid was asleep."

"Well, that waked him," laughed the foreman.

Dick crawled from the bush into which he had fallen, Without protest he took charge of the dogs.

Some time later, he rode with the deputy again while Cadger trudged ahead. Houghton turned to him.

"This guy seems to have your goat, Farrell," he said, not unkindly, but with something of contempt in his tone.

Dick shivered.

"He has," he muttered. "He isn't human."

He spoke in low tones and glanced fearfully at the foreman's bowed and bridgelike shoulders, swinging forward in the gloom above the dogs.

"That's foolishness."

"It's so. He isn't afraid of anything. He's strong as an ox. Why, he'll fight any thing or anybody. I saw him whip four men at Rainbow one night."

"Still, bullies have been beaten before now."

Dick shook his head.

"Not this one. He doesn't know what fear is. If he did, I might take a chance with him. But there's no way of stopping him."

"Sure there is," asserted Houghton. "Every man's afraid of something. He's got you buffaloed because you don't know what it is. But if you did know——"

"It doesn't exist, I tell you."

There was hopelessness in the cook's tone, and Houghton did not press the subject.

The character of the country changed. The soil became firmer, clay mixed with the sand. They were in the hardwood country now, open plains dotted with clumps of oak trees. Beside the trail a good sized stream gurgled.

Houghton got down to take the dogs from Cadger. The stream bank sloped at the place. He swung his flashlight, peered, and then with an exclamation, went to the water's edge to stoop over footprints. The others, infected by his excitement, did likewise.

The marks were deeply graven in the mire. Most of them were filled with water. But one, aslant and clear cut, proved their search prospered. There were the familiar signs, the half moon, flanked with bosses, at the heel.

"See!" cried Houghton. "That's Garland's. I could swear to it. Here's where he went up the bank again."

"Get out o' the way and let a man look," growled the foreman, and thrust Dick aside.

Taken unawares he staggered backward, toppling toward the water. One of his outflung hands caught Cadger's arm. With a barking laugh the foreman shook himself loose. Still precariously on his feet Dick splashed kneedeep into the stream.

Cadger's mirth stopped in a gulp. The bare and greasy earth, set atilt, offered no footing. It slid him also, upright but floundering, into the water. At once he tried to lift his feet, to take a step to land. The stream bed, as unstable as water, sifted away from his laced boots as if he stood on masses of very soft rubber.

Then the cozy particles closed over his instep, clutching with a thousand tiny fingers, yielding to his struggles, but dragging and sucking with a power as silky and as ruthless as a tiger's.

"Quicksand!" he shouted. "Oh, my God, get me out! Get me out quick!"

Shriek after shriek, high-pitched, womanish cries of pure terror, followed. He threw himself forward, his elbows on the edge of the stream, his fingers burrowing fruitlessly into the mud. He writhed and thrashed as if in a convulsion.

It happened so suddenly that Mel stood motionless, shocked and startled. A cool voice brought him to himself.

"Roll that log under his arms," directed Dick. The trunk of a young tree, overgrown and half embedded, lay almost at his feet. He tugged and freed it, and thrust it into the fingers of the frantic Buck.

The screams gave way to sobs and gasps as the man clawed wildly at the log. He got it under his elbows, raised himself, crushed it downward until it rested below his short ribs. Houghton caught him by the arms from above.

"Don't kick," he commanded sharply. "It only gets you in deeper. Dig your elbows in. Right straight ahead now. Keep your legs still, I tell you. Heave, now. That's it."

The foreman was weeping in abject fear as he seized Mel by the legs.

Meanwhile Dick sank gently forward. The roots of a tree thrust themselves from the bank just in front of him. The gnarls offered good handholds. He gripped them, gathered his strength and drew with a steady, increasing effort that all but frayed his tendons. The quicksand sucked thirstly at his legs. It seemed that he must tear himself in two. He could feel no progress. Yet, before he paused for breath, he was able to shift his grasp a few inches higher.

He rested. Tried again, sweat bursting from every pore, the air whistling in his throat, eyeballs starting, blood pounding in his ears like a stormy surf. The gain was less. He rested again, utterly spent, his chin in the water, the icy wavelets threatening to cut off his breath.

On the third attempt desperation nerved him. He saw he could get no outside help, for Houghton was fighting, not only to draw the insane Buck to freedom, but to save himself from being dragged into the trap. So Dick drew a breath far down into his lungs and put everything into the try. The fingers of this slimy death grudgingly slipped from his ankles, and he crawled onto the bank. At the same moment Houghton hauled Buck, who had gone limp and pulpy as he came free, to safety.

Dick was the first to recover. He sat up, and even grinned a little, if pallidly, as Mel played the flashlight upon him. "Let's go," he said, his voice shaky. The chief's worse off than we are."

"Good boy!" ejaculated the deputy, between panting breaths. "That's the stuff."

He stirred the huddled Buck with his foot.

"How you coming, Cadger?"

The foreman's answer was a groan.

"Next time maybe you won't pull so much rough stuff," went on Houghton, a thread of malice in his voice. "If you hadn't pushed Farrell, you wouldn't have had to bleat for help like a baby. Come on, let's travel. There's a mighty good chance to save Garland, now that we're all done saving you."

"Funny, but I never felt better in my life," Dick confided to Houghton, when next they rode together. "Tired, of course. But that quicksand is just what I needed."

"How's that?" asked Mel in surprize.

"It's given me my nerve back," explained the cook, simply. "I've been a lot afraid of just two things the past few years, T. B. and starvation. Lungs have been weak since I got a touch of gas in France. Came up north here to help 'em."

"Did it?"

"Yes. But I didn't feel much like working. My money slipped away, and first thing I knew I was hungry."

"You don't mean——"

"Yes, I do. Actually hungry. Without a nickel to buy anything to eat. Foolish, I know, but I couldn't bring myself to beg. When you get hungry, you get scared. I guess that was the reason I was so afraid of Cadger. And of losing my job. You saw what I stood for."

Mel nodded soberly.

"But when I felt that quicksand at my legs—why, I wasn't scared! I knew I could get out. And the thought came to me, 'If I can beat this, I can beat the starvation game.' I had been worrying about nothing."

He gave a laugh of joyous relief.

The dogs led through a broken rail fence into a field which had once been cultivated. They halted under a wide-spreading oak tree. The flashlight showed a farm wagon, its tires eaten by rust. The wagon box, wrong side up, lay near by, one end propped by a stone.

"There's where he slept last night," announced Houghton, throwing the light under the shelter. "And he ate acorns, see?" He broke away the shell of one of the many pellets scattered about, and crunched.

"Sweet acorns. Not bad at all."

A trying two hours followed. Evidently the lost man had forgotten his drive of the day before. The scent led crazily about wide spaces, doubling and knotting upon itself to the puzzlement of the dogs. Frequently he stopped to rest. Farther up the trail led to the stream. Garland had lain down to drink. The imprint of his hands was plain.

Suddenly the aimlessness ceased. The dogs struck a course and followed it.

"He's going somewhere," muttered Houghton, nerves tense.

He led them toward civilization. Neat piles of stovewood stood among the trees. The dogs padded into a grassy lane, their heads up, following easily the scent. Mel and Dick strained their eyes to pierce the darkness ahead. The thrill of anticipated success warned them. Buck Cadger, walking or riding, spoke no word. Fatigue, perhaps shame at his weakness, quenched his coarse spirit.

The procession splashed through never-ending puddles. The woods gave way to half-grown saplings, grown up since logging operations of years before. The lane became a road. At last it turned to the right and crossed the stream by a rumbling wooden bridge.

They approached splotches in the gloom, a deserted house and barn. The dogs bayed loudly, sweeping past the barn and to the door of a lean-to which joined the house. The men threw themselves from their horses and crowded in.

Mr. Garland sat in a corner asleep, his arms clasping his knees, his whole attitude that of a man making himself as small as possible against the deadly chill. As the light flashed on him, he woke and raised his head. His eyes showed intelligence. They saw that his brain was functioning again.

"Found me, eh?" he asked, in a voice husky with disuse.

DAYLIGHT. The rain had ceased when they came out at a settler's log house not far from Kalkaska. They had crossed the vast area of bad lands which stretches like a blot through the upper part of the peninsula.

The settler and his wife were up. Soon the kitchen stove glowed through its rust and the iron teakettle sang, for breakfast was in the making. Mr. Garland, apparently none the worse for his adventure, sat comfortably behind the stove. With a motion of his head Dick called Mel Houghton outside. The sky was cloudless. The air tingled electrically. The red rim of the sun peered above the horizon.

"I want you to stick around. I'm going to lick Buck Cadger."

"You going to fight him?"

"Here and now. When I think of the way that guy walked on me——"

Dick stopped and clenched his fists.

"But you're all tired out!" remonstrated the deputy. "Wait till you're rested. After breakfast—tomorrow."

Dick shook his head.

"Not another minute."

"But he's bigger than you, stronger. Why, kid, he'll murder you."

The cook straightened himself. His chest arched, his figure seemed to fill out.

"I can trim him. He's nothing but a rough-and-tumble scrapper. No science. I've always boxed, that is, always till I lost my nerve. But I'm not afraid of going hungry any more. I'm not afraid of him. I'm not afraid of anything! Since back there in the quicksand."

He opened the door, a challenge in his voice.

"Cadger!"

The foreman came out, bulking huge as a grizzly in the morning light. He rubbed his eyes.

"Well, Dinky, what you want?"

"I'm going to fight you."

The foreman looked at him in amazement.

"I don't want to fight now. I'm hungry. I'm tired."

"You've got to fight! You've been bully of Rainbow too long. Come on down here, if you aren't afraid."

Buck threw off his vest and descended from the rough-board porch.

"All right, Dinky," he sneered. "If you've got to have it."

It was a beautiful fight. Too bad more people couldn't have seen it, Mel Houghton said afterward. Buck Cadger's gang at Swede Landing, for instance. However, he told them about it so vividly that Buck's tenure as foreman ended next day. A boss so completely licked by a mere stripling doesn't remain a boss very long. In the jackpine country a man who elects to rule by his fists must rule.

The deputy sheriff was so busy enjoying the battle that he failed to notice, early, the door of the house swing open. It stayed open while Dick went down, and bounced up at once like a tumbler. While Buck, bewildered by the cook's footwork and his rapid fire of cutting, blinding smashes, went down again and again. And finally stayed down.

Then came a voice from the doorway. It was the voice of John Garland, woodsman, who had seen many a good bare-knuckle fight.

"Some scrapper," he said in his halting, husky tones. "I can use a chap like you. Who are you working for?"

Dick, panting, wiped the blood from his chopped mouth and grinned.

"You," he said.

YU DUCK SEA LAWYER

by Captain Mansfield

Author of "Bung Up and Bilge Free."

WHEN San Francisco was young and fair, and *rigor mortis* had not set in on American shipping, tall ships of many nations passed in and out through the Golden Gate.

During the summer trade winds the skippers with local knowledge would take advantage of a flood tide and a fair wind and sail to an anchorage in the bay, thereby saving their owners a bill for towage.

This was a high-handed proceeding from the tow-boat peoples' point of view, but it quite met the approval of the sailors' boarding-house keepers and their runners. For as the tall ships neared the lofty cliffs of the Marin County shore the westerly winds would let go. The sails would flap idly as she rose and fell on the ground swell rolling in through the Heads. The ships would slow down in this calm, but keep steerage way until Lime Point or Point Caballo was abeam, where the wind would take hold again.

During this short spell of calm the boarding-house runners, who had gone out to the Heads in their small, Whitehall boats, would hook on to the ships' sides and swarm aboard. They would inveigle the sailors to board at the house they represented. If it was a ship flying a foreign flag, the men would be importuned to desert, leaving their accrued, small pay, and reship out of San Francisco at big wages. Three months' advance pay in a lump sum was the bait.

Captain Carlin, the skipper of one tall ship, the *Pegasus*, was saving his owners a bill for towage. This was the young captain's first command, and it behooved him to be economical. He stroked a glossy, blond, Van Dyke beard, to which he had not yet become accustomed, and regarded the flapping sails as his ship came under the lee of Marin's tall cliffs.

He had been many times in and out of San Francisco, but never as master, and never in the ship he now commanded. All was going well, so he had no cause to worry until the ship slowed up in the calm. Then, seeing the boarding-house runners making for the vessel, he fixed the pilot with a stare from angry blue eyes, and said:

"—— those crimps! I've a good mind to keep them off the ship. They'll steal every man jack aboard of her."

"Don't do it, Captain," warned the pilot. "They'll hold you up for a crew when you are ready to leave."

So the skipper held his peace and looked at the "Chicken" in earnest conversation with Mr. Sinnett, the mate.

He knew the Chicken to be the most notorious crimp on the waterfront, and that he was then in the height of his success in his business of supplying men, or whole crews, for ships.

"Well! Blast my tarry toplights! If it isn't Brother Sinnett," was the Chicken's greeting to the mate, as he tumbled inboard over the rail. "What's the trouble, Old Fatsides?" the Chicken continued, in his oily, insinuating way. "I sure expected

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to see you skipper of the old water wagon this voyage! What's happened?"

Mr. Sinnett, cursing with extreme vigor, grasped the Chicken's arm and led him over to the deck house near the galley.

"Come over here," he said, his voice unsteady with passion, "where we got the deck to ourselves, and that swab on the poop deck there—" jerking his thumb at the captain— "can't hear us. I've got something to tell you."

Mr. Sinnett's tale caused even the case-hardened Chicken's eyes to grow big as he listened. Quickened interest showed in his face as he slapped the mate heartily on the back.

"I'll go you, me bucko mate. I'll go you even if I lose!" he said.

Then with a warning wink, as the boatswain was approaching, the mate continued in a loud, grumbling tone:

"That was a ——uva lot of lubbers you put aboard the ship last voyage!"

The Chicken chortled with glee.

"I remember," said he, "part of a threshing-machine crew. The dead one I shipped on the bark *Cassandra Adams*. I got a bunch of real men for you this time though, if you need 'em." He lowered his voice. "But wot's in it fer me if I turn this trick of yours you was talkin' about?"

"In it fer you?" repeated Mr. Sinnett with much heat. "Don't you git his three months' advance? Don't you git the blood money? Wot more do you want? I'm no bloomin' millionaire."

"Too cheap fer a job like that. You know how I can get mine. Run the whole crew off the ship. Work 'em till they will be glad to run away and leave their pay. Then I puts the new crew aboard. *Sabe?*"

Mr. Sinnett had just time to wink a fishy eye, when an order from Captain Carlin on the poop deck terminated this delectable talk and sent the mate's watch to the fore braces, and to stand by the anchor.

THEN Yu Duck, the ship's Cantonese cook, withdrew a listening ear from an open port in the galley, near which the mate and the Chicken had been talking. He lighted a pinch of Chinese tobacco in the brass bowl of his long, bamboo-stemmed pipe, the stench of which would have betrayed his presence earlier, and with stoical features walked to the opposite bulkhead of the galley, stopping before a calendar that hung there. The one deep inhalation that he drew into his lungs he now blew on the calendar, causing the cockroaches to scatter and thus give him a chance to peruse it.

This calendar of Yu Ducks was a work of wonder to him. He consulted it with reverence even on trivial matters. On each well-thumbed page was printed the day of the Chinese moon and our Gregorian calendar in English. Also a quotation from the analects in Chinese and in English. It also extolled certain wonderful medicines that would cure all the ills that Chinese flesh is heir to, and it gave lucky days and omens.

"Him mate —— flool," offered Yu Duck softly to the wildly fleeing cockroaches.

He turned up each page from the bottom with slightly trembling fingers, until he came to the page of that day. His black, bead-like eyes glittered as he held the page steady and read:

> Three errors there be into which they who wait upon their superiors may fall:
>
> I. To speak before the opportunity comes to them to speak, which I call heedless haste.
>
> II. Refraining from speaking when the opportunity has come, which I call concealment, and
>
> III. Speaking regardless of the mood he is in, which I call blindness.

For some little time Yu Duck studied the lesson for the day, until his sphinx-like, yellow countenance formed an expression. The countless, small wrinkles in his face ran together, making creases. His eyelids blinked once. This was as near to a smile as he could make it. As he smiled he stated to the cockroaches what was evidently his summing up of this lesson in philosophy.

"Him —— good book."

Then as the rattle of smooth-running blocks came to his ears, the cook, from long experience, knew that the foresail was being hauled up. He left the galley, and hobbled to his station at the foresheet to lend a hand.

When the anchor was down, and the captain busy in the cabin with the custom house people, eight bells were struck. At the sound, Yu Duck, atomically, as if he were performing a ritual, looked at the clock, changed a pot of coffee from the stove to the locker top, and stuck his head out the galley door. He saw no sign of the steward whose duty it was to carry the coffee to the captain's cabin.

"Whashee, malla?" asked Yu Duck,

possibly addressing the cockroaches, and speaking for the third time that day.

To Yu Duck custom was as the laws of the Medes and Persians. The skipper had to have his coffee at four o'clock, though the heavens fell, though the ship were sinking.

So one rheumatic old leg followed the other over the high door sill of the galley. One old, heedless slipper after the other went *flap-flap* along the deck, as Yu Duck carried the coffee pot aft.

"What do you want, you old Canton River pirate?" said the captain with pretended gruffness. "Don't you see I'm busy? Get forward where you belong."

"Error number one?" chanted Yu Duck softly but emphatically, as his black eyes glittered.

He placed the coffee pot on deck and shuffled back to his galley. On the way his eyes blinked once.

That was his second smile that day.

When inside the galley the old cook consulted his calendar at once.

> Three errors there be. . . .
> I. To speak before the opportunity comes to speak, which I call heedless haste.

"You bettee!" exclaimed Yu Duck, nodding his head sagely when he had read that far. "Me no can speakee. Hlim book —— good joss."

Captain Carlin took the desertion of his crew with increasing indignation, until he was ready to fight his own shadow. He rowed with Mr. Sinnett for overworking his men, but all to no purpose. Each morning the crew grew smaller in number.

The mate answered with truth that the work was imperative, and the fewer the men the harder those who were there must work. He asked the skipper with ill-concealed mirth, to engage new men at harbor wages until they were ready to ship a crew for sea.

The skipper turned on his heel at this and Mr. Sinnett's fat belly shook with silent laughter.

"Curse the luck!" ground out the skipper as he turned his back on the mate. "If I knew that blubber-bound lubber was running the men off the ship I'd ——"

There were scarcely men enough left to handle the mooring lines when the ship was towed down from Port Costa, and docked at Mission Rock to finish loading.

The captain paced the deck anxiously. How was he to explain to his owners why he could not hold his crew? Why he had to ship men and pay them three times the wages of a home crew. And the blood money he would have to pay for the men. How much would the Chicken hold him up for? he wondered.

Then the thought came to him that he was not the only ship master in San Francisco harbor who would be hauled on the carpet to explain on their arrival home. Older men, friends of his, who had commanded ships for a longer time than he had years to his age, were made to suffer from the same system.

This thought was comforting, and, after all, ship owners had reasoning faculties. They would know that it was through no fault of his that his crew had deserted.

In this somewhat cheered frame of mind he started to go ashore to keep a dinner engagement at the home of a friend in the Western Addition.

As he neared the gangway he saw Yu Duck come out of the galley, and shuffle toward him as fast as his stiff, old legs could carry him. The captain stopped and waited for him at the head of the gangway.

"Me likee catchee flive dollar. Can do?" began Yu Duck when he stood in front of the skipper.

"Five dollars!" repeated the captain in well-simulated surprize. "What would an old highbinder like you do with all that money? You are not going to leave the ship, too, are you?"

Yu Duck's eyes blinked and became lack-luster. His skeleton figure seemed to shrink inside his baggy, dungaree clothing, as he chanted:

"No leavee ship. Buy Swatow tobacco. Mebbe pe-lay little fantan."

The captain's heart smote him.

"Certainly, Cook! I'll give you the money. More if you want it. I was only joking. I'm thinking you're the only friend I have left on the ship."

As the captain passed him a ten dollar gold piece, Yu Duck blinked rapidly again. He clasped his two clawlike hands, and worked them up and down.

"Him Che-licken—him mate—" he began in his singsong voice.

But the skipper, thinking that he was starting a pæan of praise for the extra five dollars, interrupted him by a cheerful:

"It's all right, old bag o' bones. Keep

your weather eye lifting for these Frisco Chinamen, or they'll skin you at fantan."

He looked at his watch and hurried down the gangway.

Yu Duck gazed blankly at the broad back of the retreating skipper for a moment, and then returned to his galley to consult his infallible calendar. Turning up the page for that day he read:

> Not to speak to a man to whom you ought to speak is to lose your man; to speak to one to whom you ought not to speak is to lose your words. Those who are wise will not lose their man nor yet their words.

He read it again, possibly to make sure that there had been no mistake in the first perusal.

Then Yu Duck commenced to swear fluently in English. He called down curses on the mate and on the Chicken. He cursed the mate's ancestors back to the beginning of time. He cursed the Chicken's ancestors—if he had any, which he very much doubted—back to the same era.

Then the old cook with a deep sigh that sounded somewhat satisfied, quieted down. He stuck a few Chinese punks upright in a small box of sand that he kept for that purpose and lighted them. Next he arranged the largest pots and pans on the galley deck, and grasping the iron poker, beat them in a very business-like manner.

"That fat, obscene, turtle's son of a mate," would not allow him to use fire crackers to drive the evil spirits off the ship, so he had to use other means.

When Mr. Sinnett, that same fat mate, and what was left of the crew, rushed to the galley door at the sound of the terrific din, the cook was calmly wiping the pots and pans, and stowing them in their lockers.

THE ship *Pegasus* was being towed to sea, loaded to her Plimsoll's marks with California wheat. She buried her clipper bows deeply into the westerly swells that were running on the bar.

Her new captain, the erstwhile Mr. Sinnett, strutted proudly on the weather side of the poop deck. His dream had come true, and he was enjoying it to the utmost.

For Captain Carlin had disappeared. Late of an afternoon two days before he had left the ship to visit a friend in the Western Addition. He never reached his friend's house. The police did their best, but in the short time before the ship was ready for sea, he could not be located.

Then Mr. Sinnett cabled the ship's owners, explaining the captain's disappearance and asking for orders. The cablegram was promptly answered:

> Send ship home by Sinnett.

So Mister Sinnett was now Captain Sinnett, and he halted his proud step at the break of the poop and called blusteringly for the new mate that he had shipped to fill his former position.

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded the new mate from the main deck a few feet below him.

"Have all those drunken swine that were put aboard turned to yet?"

"All but one, sir," answered the mate. "He's some kind of a dago—still sleepin' it off. I can't wake him. But I'll try again."

"To —— with him. Loose the tops'ls. We got to get sail on the ship before the tow boat lets go of us."

The mate with another "aye, aye, sir," ran forward, bawling his orders, and as he shouted, close to the forecastle door, a man lying in a lower bunk, inside the forecastle, opened his eyes at the sound of the hoarse voice bawling his orders. With great effort and groaning the while, he worked his legs over the side of the bunk and sat up. In this position he grasped his head with both hands and stared into the semi-gloom of the forecastle.

As his eyes grew accustomed to the light, or lack of it, the blank expression of him changed to amazement. Sea chests and canvas clothes bags were piled indiscriminately about. Sea boots and oilskins kept company with pretentious shore clothes in bunks where their owners had thrown them. Empty bottles were scattered about, and in the bunk opposite him, peeping out from under a brand new sou'wester, was a bottle half full of whisky and a pound plug of tobacco. It all spoke eloquently of a new crew being turned to, as soon as they arrived on board.

The wind, whistling and droning through the ship's cordage, and the crash of the seas on her bows as she dived into them, told him that she was under way.

He suddenly became conscious of another presence near him, when from a form that had been as stationary as one of the inanimate sea chests came a familiar voice:

“You de-link littee coffee? You eatee one piece toast?”

Then Yu Duck, the Chinese cook, shuffled out of the shadows toward him. In one hand Yu Duck held a sailor’s hook pot, filled with coffee. He hooked the pot on the edge of the bunk by the sick man’s side, and offered him a piece of toast from a tin plate.

“Yu Duck,” said the invalid, weakly, “what am I doing in the forecastle? What’s going on?”

Tin plate and toast clattered to the deck as the aged cook jumped at the sound of a voice he had heard before. He recovered, and peered into the stranger’s eyes.

“——!” Yu Duck swore fervently.

Then, the English language not being expressive enough in extreme cases, he communed with himself in Cantonese.

The stranger brought him out of it with a stern:

“Belay that, you old hatchet man! I asked you a question.”

But Yu Duck hesitated. He would temporize with this madman, until he could consult his good joss, his calendar.

“You no savve Yu Duck name. What ship you belong where Yu Duck cook?”

The stranger took a drink of the hot, black coffee, got to his feet, and held on to the bunk.

“Cook,” he said, “you haven’t got the sense of one of your own galley cockroaches. Who gave you a ten-dollar gold piece the other day if it wasn’t I?”

“——” began Yu Duck as he started for the door and the omniscient calendar.

“Stop! Come back here and tell me what you know about this,” was the stern command.

Yu Duck shuffled reluctantly back, took a small mirror that was hung, swaying to the roll of the ship, on the wall, and held it up before the stranger’s face.

“You no belong skipper! You no belong Ol’ Man! You no belong Clapta Clarlin! Who you belong? I te-link you belong one dago.”

Captain Carlin looked at his reflection in the mirror and understood. Gone was his reddish, Van Dyke beard, always trimmed to a nicety. His yellow hair was cut short, and dyed a glistening blue-black. To the lobe of one ear there hung, coyly, a small, gold earring. His skin was stained a light, mahogany color. His mustache, also dyed black, was curled up at the ends, and held by wax on each side of his high Roman nose. To add piquancy, and to crown this look of ferocity, there was a ridge, bristling with black hair that began at the top of his forehead and extended back out of sight. It was where a lead pipe in the hands of the Chicken or one of his henchmen had formed itself to the contour of his skull and knocked him out. He had been shanghaied as a seaman aboard his own ship.

While Yu Duck held the mirror, he watched keenly each expression on the captain’s face, expressions varying from different degrees of astonishment and pure, unadulterated anger to grim determination. The ancient cook read them as he would his calendar, and a great light dawned.

“Me much savvy have got! You Clapta! Him mate— Him Chelicken makee one piece talkee. Me catchee one piece talkee in galley. Him Chelicken makee shanghai Claptan other ship. Then him mate belong claptan.”

“What?” grated the captain. “What’s all this gibberish? Say it again, slow.”

So the cook repeated what he had been longing to tell the captain for days, and in the repetition twisted his English more than ever. But the captain got his meaning and sent him for the mate.

“Tell him to come here at once.”

“Him mate no mate now!” objected Yu Duck, shaking his head. “Him belong claptan now.”

“Go!” thundered the captain, doubling his fist and striding toward the cook.

YU DUCK went—with astonishing agility for one of his alleged years—but not to Mr. Sinnett, the whilom captain. Instead he made a straight wake for the galley and the calendar so dear to his Cantonese heart.

While he consulted it with surprizing eagerness, Captain Carlin in the forecastle awaited his return with the mate with what patience he could muster. His head ached. He felt faint and dizzy, so he sat on a sea chest and drank the remaining coffee that was in the hook pot. He felt drowsy and would have slept, but the loud slatting of the head sails as they were being hoisted brought him to his feet.

With a muttered curse he strode to the door, and nearly collided with Yu Duck, hurrying in.

"Him number one piece error. No can do. Number two piece error can do but no can do. Number three piece error can do chop chop!"

"Shut up, —— you! Where's the mate—Sinnett?" rasped the captain. Then, pushing the startled cook out of his way, he strode to the forecastle doorway and looked along the busy, main deck, at the crew setting sails.

"I'll get to the bottom of this business now," he muttered, as he stepped on deck.

Nor did his bearing, for the moment, bespeak one who would shun a scrap in the getting. But he miscalculated his strength and would have fallen from dizziness as he staggered aft had not the heaving deck sent him against the rail. He held to a friendly belaying pin and glared savagely at a strange mate.

The strange mate returned the glare with interest, cursed him roundly and ordered him to tail on to the halyards of the main top gallant sail that he was setting.

"Jump to it you spaghetti-eatin' blackamoor!" bellowed the strange mate quickly. "I'll have no malingerin' dagos aboard this ship."

He rushed with clenched fist at the captain, who had made no move to pull on the rope, as ordered, but stood with a grim smile, grasping the belaying pin and summoning all his energy to meet the onrushing mate.

The mate at close quarters swung for the captain's jaw. The latter ducked, jerked the belaying pin out of the rail and brought the end of it down on the mate's head as he spun half way round from the force of the punch that missed its objective.

The new mate dropped to the deck like a plummet, and the skipper, still grasping his weapon of defense, made a second wobbly start for his own end of the ship.

"Back—you!" he ground out at the boatswain, who had hurried to the mate's aid. "Lay your hand on me and I'll brain you!"

At the sound of the captain's voice the boatswain halted abruptly, eyed him with looks of astonishment, then grinned sheepishly.

"—— your lap-streaked hide, Joe," he blustered, "look wot you done to the mate. Go turn in again an' sleep it off," he coaxed. "The captain'll have you in irons for that job."

The captain ignored the boatswain's importunities.

"Carry that man to his room," he ordered, pointing to the fallen mate, and addressing the mate's watch that stopped work and gathered round him.

"Good for you, Dago," offered one old salt to the captain.

"Bully boy, Joe! He sure got wot was comin' to him," said another, swearing lustily and jerking his thumb at the mate.

"Shut up! You swabs!" roared the captain, calling both men by their names, which brought a laugh from the others of the watch, and caused the two enthusiastic ones to look at the Dago in wonder.

Then came a throaty voice from the poop deck that made the skipper grind his teeth.

"Wot's the matter with you men forrad there? Stop your fightin' and get that to' gallant yard mast headed before I come down to you."

The watch paid no attention to this order and threat, but followed the tall form of Captain Carlin aft, keeping a respectful distance from those flashing blue eyes and the iron belaying pin.

"Who's the Dago? Who's the bloomin' Eyetalian?" were the questions passed from man to man of the watch on their way aft. But none could answer save that he was one of the new crew.

Looking down at the captain as he neared the break of the poop deck, Mr. Sinnett, his mate—his chief officer, who had sailed from Liverpool with him, and now was usurping his command.

The man was plainly nervous. His new responsibilities—the fight on the main deck—the sight of his mate being carried below—and no doubt a guilty conscience, all told on him.

"Wot do you want aft, here, my man?" he asked thickly, as the captain ran up the steps to the poop deck and faced him. "Go forrad where you be ——"

"What do I want, you cursed crook, you? I want you, first."

With that, and while Sinnett's look of annoyance changed to one of surprize at the sound of a familiar voice, the skipper again wielded his deadly belaying pin.

Sinnett jerked his head aside, so there was a bit of his ear left on his fat head as the iron pin caromed to his shoulder. He staggered, then, bellowing vengeance, made for the cabin entrance.

But the skipper beat him in the sprint to the companionway—and his gun. Sinnett backed handsomely, till he fetched up against the weather rail, quivering like a jellyfish as the skipper followed him with deadly pertinacity.

Sinnett was cornered, his retreat cut off, except by the way of the Main Ship Channel—overboard. Like the cornered rat he was he squealed—

"Help! you men! Grab this crazy man!"

The men appealed to were the second mate and his watch, who were on the poop deck setting sail on the mizzen. They had stopped their work to gaze spellbound at this exhibition of cyclonic wrath from one of their own shipmates—a Dago at that—whom none of them knew.

At Sinnett's cry for help they came out of their daze to obey his order, but halted as the second mate reeled back among them from a blow of the captain's fist; halted, and gazed with increasing excitement at one of their watch in the mizzen rigging just over the captain's head. The man had been aloft loosing sails, and now was descending stealthily as a cat, making signs for them to stand back.

Then the man in the rigging directly over the captain's head swung inboard, hanging by his hands, and let go.

The skipper, following Sinnett's exultant glance aloft, had barely time to spring aside as the man came hurtling down.

The foolish look on the sailor's face when he missed his quarry changed to chagrin as the starboard watch hooted him for his clumsiness. He was reaching for his sheath knife when the captain rapped him with his iron pin. Down he went, and the ship, taking a weather roll, carried him to the ashen-faced Sinnett's feet.

Sinnett jumped over the unconscious man and bolted, narrowly missing another blow from the swift-working belaying pin. He found refuge with the port watch that, headed by the boatswain, was swarming on the poop to see the fun. As he ran he yelled lustily to the second mate and boatswain to grab the crazy man.

"Grab him yourself!" advised the second mate, who was nursing a rapidly closing eye.

But the boatswain, long accustomed to the slogan, "Obey orders if you break owners," did the best he could.

"Nab him, bullies!" he roared in stentorian tones to the port watch. "Nab the guinea before he massacrees the new captain!"

So saying, and followed by the port watch, he started to round up what was to him a hostile Greek sailor on the war path.

At that moment the fat Mr. Sinnett came through the companionway to the poop, like a porpoise broaching, and breathing like one. Close behind him was Yu Duck, the ancient cook.

Sinnett, after mingling with the men of the port watch, had rushed into the cabin, by way of the main deck, for his revolver. He met Yu Duck coming out. Yu Duck had a gun, an old, long-barreled, 45 caliber Peacemaker revolver. He waved Sinnett up the companionway. Sinnett climbed the stairs, the gun muzzle poking him in the back.

"The ship's a madhouse!" he yelled. "Here's the bloomin' cook gone off his head, too. Take that gun away from him."

Yu Duck grinned, glanced at the men who were about to rush the captain and hurried to the latter's side to give him the gun. Then he extracted from under his shirt a razor-edged hatchet and balanced it with affectionate precision.

THE fresh breeze played with Yu Duck's baggy clothing. It streamed the stray, gray hairs on his brow, and his long queue to leeward, and as he shook the keen-bladed weapon at the crew, with the light of battle in his snapping, black eyes, he seemed the personification of a hatchet man out for a rival tong.

The skipper took the proffered revolver, and to Yu Duck's whispered words, "Him no catchee bullet," laughed joyously.

"Now, you men who think I am not master of this ship, step up and prove your arguments," he said, looking at Sinnett. "The cook has more sense than all the rest of you put together."

"Him belong clapta now," quoth the cook as he balanced his hatchet.

"Wot do you know about it, Cookie?" asked the boatswain with an evident desire to parley. "Pay out your cable. Let's hear from you."

"Him book in galley good joss," shrieked Yu Duck. "Him book plenty savvy. Me look see."

"Book, is it?" came back the boatswain with fine scorn. "Shiver me timbers! He knows the Old Man be the book. It's the bell, book and candle he means. Blow me, if he ain't a heathen padre."

"Me plenty savvy," answered the cook. "Me savvy him Sinnett, him Chicken makee one piece talkee—me catchee in galley. Him Chicken shanghai clapta on other ship—then Sinnett belong clapta this ship. But him Chicken double closs Sinnett—shanghai clapta this ship—makee Sinnett one piecee —— fool."

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" roared the boatswain, slapping his leg and looking at the other men who were also laughing. "That's a horse on our bucko mate," he croaked, when he recovered his breath.

The spell of ill feeling was broken. Even the second mate forgot his bruised eye for a moment, and joined in the laugh.

"Three cheers for Captain Carlin, the skipper wot came back!" yelled the boatswain, throwing his cap in the air.

"An' to Yu Duck, the pagan priest of the *Pegasus!*" cut in Sails, the sailmaker above the din.

"Belay that noise, you toggle-jointed swabs!" shouted the captain, trying to make himself heard.

He looked around for Sinnett, but the erstwhile mate had sneaked off to his room.

"The tow line! The tow line!" the skipper shouted again. "Let go that tow line, Bosun! Don't you hear the tow boat whistling?"

"Keep her sou'west, Mr. Second Mate!" he said to that officer. "Get the kites on her, and the anchors on the fo'castle head. And call me before we leave the light ship!"

He stalked to the companionway, leading to the cabin—and to Mr. Sinnett.

Yu Duck's old, heelless slippers went *flap-flap* along the deck as he hastened to his galley to burn a punk of praise in front of his beloved joss, his calendar.

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

Looking Back

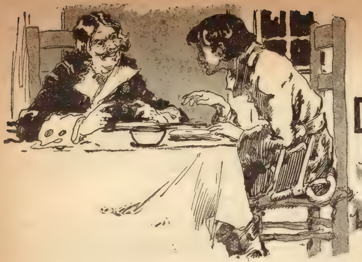
I WILL remember it all; all the whole forty and more years of it—every day that we can and every night—and be glad it was me, Billy, that was with me—you and me, Billy, we're a whole lot ourselves all wrapped up in one another. One thing was to teach one of me something and another thing was to teach another of me something—you can't learn all of life's lessons just in one way or just in one day—you've got to be patient. Some day you'll develop into just One Bill, and that'll be at the end, when the road grows shadowy. Then, Billy, we'll not be afraid of the shadows, or the branch glooms overhead; we'll just plug along a little way farther till the end of the road comes—and go round the bend with a laugh.

Remember the *Tusitala*—the ship that Morley bought? Well, I hope that sometimes at night-time they'll all go fast to sleep and leave her alone under the stars with only her mate, look-out, and man at the wheel—as she was in the good old days when her sisters were so many. For there'll be times when she'll be wanting to remember her sisters, and the days that once were. I do hope that the people who own her will remember that maybe she's got a bit of a spirit all to herself. It sounds crazy maybe; yet I think often that things that are so lovely have spirits. I've met her at sea years and years ago.

In the middle of the street where I live there stands an old, old oak-tree that was here long, long before the city grew to be even a village. Birds have nested in it, have courted in its leafy branches. Children have woven poppy garlands under it. Teamsters and mules have rested under it at noon. It's an old-timer. It was here when ships came to and went from Frisco in great fleets, bearing away, when they sailed, the cargoes of grain from this one-time wheat plain.

Now, now that the old days are over, that the ships no longer come, that the grain is no more grown, that the town is growing fast, they're chopping the old tree down—because they say it will be in the way of the pavement.

They prefer concrete to a tree—an old oak-tree whose every windy murmur is romance. It will be dead by tonight. I tried to save it, but that wasn't any good. The women of the town tried to save it—but that was all in vain. It is dead—by tonight.



THE BOLD DRAGOON

A Four-Part Story Part II

by Leonard H Nason

Author of "Rockets at Daybreak," "A Sergeant of Cavalry," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IT WAS in June, 1743, that we routed the French at Dettingen, in Bavaria. We had been without food or fodder for many a day, and as soon as the French broke, leaving open the road to Hanau, the army forgot the enemy in its eagerness to reach its base of supplies.

My nag was in such a plight that I was left behind, and in the night came upon a French officer and killed him after a long-drawn fight. I relieved him of a fine sword, rings, gold buttons and other booty. Then Austrian marauders, our allies, set upon me. Badly wounded, I lay out in the marshes until a party of our own men found me and carted me to Hanau.

A physician named Gulf took me into his house and cared for me in exchange for one of the rings I had taken from the Frenchman. When the army marched out of Hanau I was left behind, for I was still very weak. Some days later I was discharged although I was in no state to travel, and the doctor would have robbed me of my last gold button had I given him the chance.

At a near-by tavern I met a youth, Viscount Barnet, who had deserted his post because he wished to reach England in a great hurry. An estate awaited him there, but he was without funds and in debt. He suggested that I let him exchange my booty for money, lend half the sum to him, and that we travel together to the coast. This I agreed to do, although Gulf cursed me for a fool, and went so far as to offer me a commission in the army of the Pretender, Charles Stuart, but I cursed him back and left his house.

We started, the viscount and I, in the Frankfort diligence, but were held up by a scouting party which tried to slaughter us, for the officer knew that Barnet was a deserter. We were almost beaten when a party of horsemen that I had seen at Gulf's house, came to our rescue. They cut down the scouting party and rode away. No sign could I find of Barnet until I reentered the diligence and found him hiding beneath a bale of goods.

"Do you owe those men money?" I asked.

"Well, not money, but something of the sort," said he, and then would speak no more, but held his peace, chewing upon his fingers.

WHEN it was broad day and we had stopped a moment at an inn, or rather a pot-house, to have a mouthful to warm our bones, the viscount began to swear. After a time he stopped and appeared to be cheerful once more. There was a choking fire there, a mean, tiny blaze that would scarce light a pipe, and before this we stood, to attempt to dry our garments.

There were no guests at this time of the day, except a drunken grenadier that lay in a corner, so we had the place to ourselves. This country had all been laid waste the winter before by the Austrian irregulars, the inns were poor, the farmers had but little stock, and there was hardly any travel.

"I am sore perplexed," said the viscount. "I fear we have begun an ill-starred journey. The army can not be very far ahead of us, since there are patrols and drunken soldiers so thick, and I am running my head into a hempen gorget. I think I will abandon this project entirely. The weather is too wet and the country rough."

"You would be a fool to throw away an estate for a little rain. Be thankful we have this journey to make in summer and not in midwinter."

"Umm!" he muttered, "and when the

"The Bold Dragoon," copyright, 1925, by Leonard H. Nason.

bodies of that patrol are found there will be as fine a hue and cry raised as ever was heard by fox on an autumn morning. And if our fine diligence drivers peach upon us——"

He tugged at his neck and dropped his head upon one side with goggling eyes and lolling tongue, to imitate a man who had been hanged.

"If you had been watching what was going on, instead of cowering under your hides like a child under a coverlet in a storm of thunder, you would have seen one of those strange horsemen dropping a French cap, one of those things they wear about the camp, near the body of the officer. So, then, who finds the bodies immediately cries out that French raiders have done it."

"Now was that so?" he cried, clapping his hands. "Was it so, indeed! That was a clever thought, that man had discretion, by the teeth of Paul! And I did cower, indeed, for I warrant you that those three men had more swordsmanship in the back of their necks than most men have in their ten fingers."

Here the drivers called to us and we went out to the diligence once more. We had no further discussion, but sat dripping in our wet clothes, until we came into Frankfort. It was plain that we were catching up with the army, for we kept passing bodies of horse, and now and then saw them spurring across the fields, after some of the many stragglers that peeped at us from every bush and covert as we went by.

We came upon many broken wagons and dead horses, left behind as the army advanced. As we came into the city the diligence was halted, the goods inspected, and all the rolls and bundles prodded with bayonets to be sure there was no one concealed therein. The viscount and I showed our papers and were allowed to pass without hindrance.

The viscount was apprehensive and kept his eyes going from right to left, and his sword ever ready to hand, until we came to the inn, where we got down and went into the common room. Here there was so much smoke, and such a concourse of people, soldiers of all armies, citizens, thieves, camp followers, sutlers, and I know not what else, that the viscount felt secure and indeed none would have recognized him except by a searching look perhaps, for a man looks very differennt in civil attire than he does in uniform.

"Let us have some meat and something to drink and get ourselves good and warm and dry," began the viscount, "and then let us see what we can do to make further plans. I fear we must go horseback after all, for the northern reaches of the Rhine are too wild for us. I have had enough of fighting, I promise you. And harky! Keep your eye peeled for a sight of any of our six friends. If they see us we are as good as dead."

We ate and listened to the talk. It was all of the army having crossed above Mayence and the probabilities of its going to Worms, and of the French spies that were reported loose in the army, and that patrols had been searching for since the day previous, and of how poor the forage was, and that the Duke was very likely to be made lieutenant general for his work at Dettingen, though if truth were told I think it was my Lord Stair that did the disposing of the troops.

After we had eaten we went about seeing what we could do for a boat to take us down to the Rhine, and then the rest of the way to the sea, wandering about the muddy streets, and in peril of our lives, either from the horsemen galloping about, or the rumbling carts that crowded one to the wall and then showered him with mud.

No one knew of a boat that could be had nor of any one who did boating, for it was low water, and the most of the boating and rafting of timber was done in the spring. Moreover, the viscount was averse to spending the great amount of time that would be necessary.

Neither of us had much idea of how long it was to go by water to the sea, but we knew that the Netherlands were the next country to Flanders, which was not far off, and so it could not be at a great distance, but it seemed from our talk with these people that we would be lucky to reach the coast before the setting in of winter.

"That settles that matter," said the viscount. "That settles it properly. There is nothing for it but to go by horse, for your diligence is too slow, and they are forever getting mired. Also, we on horseback will have more chance against any one that has evil intent toward us. I have no stomach for doing any fighting from a cart, nor from the ground."

"No, that's true enough," I agreed, "once at that is enough."

So we applied to the host of the inn, getting a seller of cattle to speak for us, and tell us what the landlord said, for we had no German. We found that horses were for hire, they being rented for the stage, that is to the next town or so, whence they would be returned, and we could get others. Thereupon we went to bed in very deep feathers, and were sore bitten by fleas, so that we were glad enough to be up in the dawn and to horse.

WE RODE for the next fortnight, making easy stages on account of the burning heat and because I was unable to stand the longer ones, and so got well into Flanders. We were intending to make for Ostend, where we would have the best chance of getting into England. There were few travelers for pleasure, because of the troubled times, but there were great numbers of soldiers, either messengers, or convoys for supplies, or officers going on furlough, trotting by with a servant or two at their backs. We passed from time to time, drafts of green, raw, open-mouthed recruits, their ill-fitting uniforms still creased, so new were they from the magazines, and the men's faces still white from the shop, or healthily browned from working in the fields, and too clear eyed for soldiers.

We kept from the routes that led toward the army when we could, lest the viscount meet with some one that knew him, but we could not always avoid the soldiery, since there were not many passable roads, and it took all of these to keep the army supplied.

We had come, at the end of a baking day, to a small town near Brussels, which city we hoped to make the following day. We turned our horses into the yard, had them watered, and went into the inn to see about lodging and supper, and the hire of horses for the morrow.

There was a great sound of singing and shouting from the common room, and we should have known enough to stay out, but we did not, and went in and found the place filled with officers, young men for the most part who had just had commissions bought for them and were going out to join their regiments. They were little more than boys, though there were some older men among them, probably returning from furlough or army business at home. The viscount and I looked at each other and came to a stand.

"We had best go in now," said I, "for they have seen us and if we duck out, it will look more suspicious than if we go in."

"Well, let's stay in a corner then, and take no part in the drinking, for as sure as I shall burn in ——, some one of these bantams will know me, and our journey is at an end."

"Your journey," I reminded him.

"Aye," said he, sourly enough, "I said *my* journey. Be —— to you."

With that we went in and sat down in the darkest corner.

For all it was summer and the heat of the day terrible, the nights were chill and so a good fire was built up and these men sat about it, smoothing their new lace and wagging their shoulders to let the light glance on their epaulets, and swearing and drinking prodigiously to show their manliness and acquaintanceship with the world.

They were singing songs in turn and continued to do so while the viscount and I broke our fast miserably on tough mutton kidney and watery wine. Some of the officers sang sentimental songs and others songs that were not sentimental, but which were applauded to the echo nevertheless, and then one got up and, waving his mug, sang a new one, written about our battle, that I thought was well done enough.

"Then up rode Billy the Bold,
And made his horse to prance.
He showed that he came of a mold,
That could fight as well as dance.
Ten thousand of France he slew
While he fought by his father's side,
When his leg with a ball was pierced through
'Smart money, my boys,' he cried."

The roar after that ended shook down the dust from the rafters and such was the gust from the cheering that the chimney smoked.

There was one young man that sat near us and his round, chubby face was as innocent as that of a babe. He could not have been above fifteen, if he was that old, but he howled with the rest and waved his mug in air, and discreetly poured its contents into the sand of the floor when he was unobserved.

"How long have you been with the army?" I asked him.

"A matter of a month or more," replied chubby-face, noting my citizens' cloth with disdain, and putting up his nose at me.

"So you are all for beating the French," said the viscount, "and full of eagerness to meet the monseers."

"Eager I am," said chubby-face, "and when I have met the enemy, I shall beat him and I can."

"Do you know what the war is about?" I asked.

"Faith, that I do not," said he, "save that it is about some —— queen or other."

Here the viscount and I laughed so hearily at this young man's innocence that we were quite breathless. When we were finished, we found that we were like to laugh from the other side of our mouths before the evening was done. An officer had been singing a very heartbreaking song about the maiden fair that he had left behind and he would see her no more alas, for his bed was on the cold moor, and his knapsack his pillow, though I have never seen an ensign with a knapsack yet.

Be that as it may, we had laughed at the very most heartbreaking part, and the officer in question was regarding us very wrathfully, as were the rest of the company. We were both sober enough then, I promise you. However, seeing from our looks and our confused faces that it was not at the song that we had laughed, the young fellow would have doubtless gone on, but that a fire-eater, an officer of horse, an older man who had undoubtedly been telling them all, ever since they had left England, what a blood drinker he was, got staggeringly to his feet and vowed that he would sweat us.

Now ever since our encounter with the patrol between Hanau and Frankfort, I had been accustomed to taking the Picinino from my belt and hiding it in the hay or under a hedge or somewhere outside the inn, and thus escaping a good deal of pointing and peering and loose talk about it, for it was a French sword and there was no disguising the fact. So on this night I had slipped the sword into the stable thatch and gone in to supper without it, and hence when this brawl seemed to be breaking on us, I had no weapon and was like to be in sorry case. The blood drinker moved on us a little staggeringly, but very sternly withal, and came to our table.

"Ha!" said he, thrusting his face into mine, "our song makes you laugh, does it? It is for such as you that we die and are eaten by the ravens and you find something to laugh at in our songs! I see you wear no sword! What are you, huckster, sutler, or hedge priest, that you follow the army weaponless? Ha, I would kick you out of doors, only I am over cautious of my boots!"

I said nothing in reply, but looked him steadily in the face, and he thinking to have done me down, turned to the viscount.

I had had little opinion of the viscount's courage. He was such a trembly, finger chewing sort of a man. He was a gambler, a deserter, doubtless a rogue when he could muster the courage, and his actions during the fight with the patrol had not certainly been those of a bold man. He had indeed killed one of the troopers, but he had broken off the fight afterward and run and hid under the hides. So then, when the fire-eater turned his burning gaze on the viscount, I expected some signs of dismay. Instead the viscount looked the other very steadily in the face and curled his lip in a sneer.

"Do you find something to laugh at in a soldier's song?" roared the fire-eater.

"Are you a soldier?" asked the viscount very innocently.

The fire-eater was quite upset by this question and could only wag his jaw. Finally he found breath and opened his mouth to roar. At that instant the viscount swung his mug and the wine that it contained shot down the fire-eater's throat, and near strangled him. He coughed and gasped and choked and stamped about.

Meanwhile the company of officers began to murmur among themselves and began to leave their tables and gather around us. I looked about me for a weapon and resolved that if I was so lucky as to escape from this broil with my life, I would never so much as let the Picinino out of my hand again.

The fire-eater had cleared his throat and dashed the tears and wine from his eyes, the while he bent a very fierce gaze upon the viscount.

"Your life for this!" he roared, and tugged out his sword

THE viscount's bench clattered against the table leg and fell thudding into the sand, while his sword flashed into the firelight like a tongue of lightning. Instead of putting it in guard, however, he rested the point on his toe, and folded his hands. The fire-eater seemed no less thunderstruck by such conduct than the rest of us, for he came to a dead halt and the most laughable expression of surprize and wonder came over his face. His eyes wandered from the viscount's face to the roof, then about the company, and then fluttered a little.

Then the fire-eater seemed to melt inside, and went slumping down on the sand like a candle before a hot fire. There was a shout of surprize or rage, I could not tell, and every one pressed forward to help the fire-eater to his feet.

I shoved with the rest to see what had caused this strange occurrence, but when I had come near enough to see, it needed no second look to tell me that the officer of horse would ruffle and bully and rant no more. He had been thrust through the heart, but so quickly and so dexterously had the viscount done it, and the room being a little murky from the smoke and insufficient light, that none of us had seen the stroke.

It was an awful thing, a mysterious thing, to see this man die so quickly and suddenly, and I could see that many of the wide-eyed, smooth-faced youths were a little sick and beginning to wish they had stayed at home. At this time some one shouted, "Treachery!" and the company blazed like a dry rick.

The first one that came to hand I knocked out of the scene with as shrewd a blow as ever the great Broughton delivered. I had up a stool and swept some more from the scene with it, but they were all barking and clamoring with more noise than a pack of hounds at the kill, and reaching over each other to prick me with their swords.

I grabbed a brad-awl out of one youngster's hand, but it was a cheap blade such as the costumers sell to these springalds, and it broke under my hand. I beat down with the stool again, and it shivered into bits, the leg breaking and the rest of it flying off into the crowd.

Thereupon I mounted nimbly upon a a table and unhooking a mug from the row that hung on the beam, broke it upon the head of the first cherub that I saw. As fast as they came to the table to lay hold of me, I put my foot into their faces, and unhooked another mug or two and broke it as before, and even began to laugh and enjoy it, for it seemed that I was going to make the table good against them all.

Now the people of the inn, who had taken to their holes when the brawl had first begun, seeing that their store of mugs was likely to be laid waste, began to bestir themselves. First a large, fat woman, perhaps the innkeeper's wife, began to cast boiling water about, and the cherubs on the skirts of the crowd gave tongue immediately and took to their heels, clutching themselves.

The innkeeper and a maid or two set themselves to drag away all they could lay hand on, but the press was so thick, and the room so dark by now with the dust that was raised, that they did not make much headway. I broke a jug on the head of the innkeeper and he went out of sight with little desire to return.

This was an act of folly on my part, but I was so shaken by the fight and the excitement and the thought that I was beating them all, that I forgot all wisdom and so hove the mug at him with a will, where his bald head shone against the dark. His wife, perceiving this, raised a howl that rang above all the rest, but I gave it little heed.

The more fool I, for just as I was standing on one leg, with the other outstretched to kick an enemy under the nose, a flitch of bacon sailed through the air, like an ill-omened bat, and catching me where the neck joins the head, and unbalanced as I was, swept me from the table and into the crowd. Then they had their revenge upon me, I promise you, and the last I remember was being cast bodily from the door into the stable midden, and glad enough I was to lie there.

It seemed but a minute before I came to myself, but it was late in the night, and the moon up, and the viscount pouring water from his hat into my face.

"You great simple ass!" said he, as soon as he saw my eyes open, and knew that I had my sense back. "What a goose you are! Haven't you brains enough to know that the time to be going is when they are all goggling at the slain man? It is a wonder you were not killed."

"What became of you?" I gasped, amid my groans as I attempted to rise.

"Why, when I had killed that ruffler so so neatly that it took him some time to find it out himself, I just went out the door, while they were all looking at him, and so I went into the stable, and having put saddles on our horses, prepared to go and then I heard the play starting, so I waited to see what would come of it, and sure enough, a great booby of a dragoon comes flying out the door, and after him all the fledglings. Well, they were put out of the inn and the door shut, so we have no more to fear from them, for they have taken themselves off and gone elsewhere to do their howling. Come, on your feet! We must put ground between us and this cursed inn. Up, now, stir your pegs!"

"You rave," said I. "I am in fifty parts by the feel, and can not stir a foot to save myself from the gallows!"

"That is just what we are fleeing!" urged the viscount. "We have let steel into a man and that is not a light offense for a citizen to do to a soldier outside of England. There are no civil courts here, by the ——'s tail! Up, now, here are the horses! Give me your foot."

My head was spinning and I was exceeding sick at the stomach, but I managed to get into the saddle, where I lay down upon the horse's mane, letting my hands fall on either side. The viscount took hold of the rein and was for leading out the hores, but I remembered my sword.

"Hold!" I cried, as loudly as I could. "Hold! I have forgotten my sword!"

"Be —— to it!" said the viscount, spurring his horse.

"I shall not stir a foot without it!" I shouted. "Ho! You ——! Halt! By ——, I'll have the place by the ears! Halt, I say! You runagate! Ho, there! You —— white-livered cadger!"

"Oh, ——," groaned the viscount, "this cursed, lubberly dragoon will be the hanging of me yet! Stop that howling! Peace, for the love of Andrew with his heels in air! Oh, —— be the day I ever set out in your company! Don't get down, or I'll never be able to hoist you up again. Where is your sword? I'll get it for you; where is it, only stop this roaring!"

I directed him to the thatch where I had thrust the sword and he found it easily enough. I belted it with trembling fingers and away we went, the viscount spurring and cursing, and looking over his shoulder. The inn was closed and dark and the people probably within it under the bed, for an officer had been killed in their house and they expected to find the roof afire over their heads.

"Ride!" cried the viscount. "Ride, ride, we must get away!"

WE TROTTED as fast as our tired horses would go and that was too fast for me and we came shortly to a crossroads, one of which, so the viscount told me, went to Brussels, one to Louvain, and one north to the Low Countries. He dismounted and walked about in the dark, feeling in the road with his hands, and at last he came to the side of my horse, looking up at me, where I lay with my head hanging.

"We cannot go farther to Ostend," said he. "We can not take ship from the base for it is running our heads into a noose. We must go north and cross from thence. This is a —— of a mess we are in!"

"We!" I cried. "We! You are the man that slew the officer! We! If you had not been so lively with your steel, we had not had all this trouble and I would not have every bone in me broken."

He answered never a word, but got to his horse and away we went. The pain of the horse's motion and the sickness I had, and the weakness that was still on me from my wound, wracked me most to death. I pleaded with the viscount to walk a while, and even tried to pull down my horse, but the viscount had him by the rein and so I could make no headway in that manner.

After a time I began to curse and yell, and tax the viscount with torturing me purposely. I was in a sad condition because these fledglings, these chubby-faced boys, had all had big feet and they had marched and countermarched up and down my bones with the precision of a regiment of grenadiers, to say nothing of ringing all the hours of the clock upon me with stools, mugs and trenchers.

Finally I could stand the pace no longer, but simply let go and the motion of the horse soon tumbled me into the road, where I lay and hoped that I would soon die.

The viscount rounded to without a word and dismounted.

"Is this the end of you?" he asked.

"I do not care the half of a clipped farthing," said I. "This is a soft road and a not overly cold night, so leave me to die in peace, and not to be cloven on that cursed beast. I tell you I would rather ride the wooden horse with a round dozen of muskets tied to either ankle, than spend another instant on that one there. Leave me! Begone!"

Now though he had half of my money, I had a wadset against his estate for five times the sum, so that I cared not the slightest whether he stayed or went. Indeed I hoped he would go, for he had brought me nothing but ill luck and trouble since we had left Hanau.

The viscount straightened and looked all around the country. We were crossing one of those great lonely moors that there are in this country, all sand and desolation, and black night. There was no house nor hayrick nor any place to cover a man's head, but I had little care regarding it. The ground was soft and I had my sword, and a man does not die of exposure at that season of the year.

"Listen," said the viscount; "it is really I that am in danger, and not you. Oh, curse the day that ever I first girted on sword! He should not have tried to make sport of me, though, for I am a fearsome man! Oh! —— I should have but pinked him! Well, let's not waste time putting broken jugs together! Again, listen. We will go to Rotterdam and from thence take ship. I will go ahead for I am the one they will seek; it was I that slew him.

"I will wait in Williamstadt for you. Go to the sign of the *Gaper* in Kipstraat. It is found easily enough, a Turk's head, and inquire for me. I will wait, I promise you. We will find time and trouble enough getting a ship. Sleep here. You will be better in the morning, I warrant you. You will be much better in the morning."

This last he said as he was walking over to his horse and then he mounted and was gone. I dragged myself across the road and into the sand, which was soft, and even warm. Then I put my sword out of the way, pillowed my head on my dragoon's valise, and thought to sleep. Now having my ear to the ground, I could hear more clearly than before, if any one should approach on horseback. So it was that I heard the thumping of hoofs, many of them, and I took hold of my sword, though I had scarce strength to draw it.

I thought then that these men, if they pursued us, would press on after the viscount, and not see me, and so I decided that I would not make any move to show them where I was, for I was a little weary of bearing all the knocks while the viscount got off with a whole skin. Therefore, I stayed where I was and in a short time a party of horsemen went by, black against the black sky, shuffling the dust in clouds.

It was quite dark, but having them against the sky as I did, I could see that they were not soldiers, both from their headdress and their cloaks. They went clopping by, six of them, three ahead and three following, riding hard and steadily, though I could see from the way their horses hung their heads, and from the sound of their spurring, that the beasts were tired.

So they went by and paid me no heed, which was not strange, seeing that they would have no way of knowing I was there, though plainly enough to be seen had they thought to look. And after they were gone I tried to think what was remarkable about them, and where I had seen men like that before.

This manner of thought took my mind from my bruises, and the soreness of them, so I followed it for some time and it was not until I was very near asleep that I remembered where I had seen those horsemen. They were the six that had rescued us from the patrol at Hanau. Of this I was as sure as I was of my own name. I was quite awake after that and could not get to sleep for some time.

Those men had said something about being eager to see my friend, by which I knew they meant the viscount, and if they came up on him they would get their chance. However, I supposed that he would ride as hard as they, and having both horses now, could change from one to the other. If they came up on him, let him look to his neck, for he would no longer have me to be his shield.

When it was day and the sun shining in my face, I got up, though I was so stiff that I could barely stand. However, I must be gone from this wild moor, for there was no shade from the sun, nor any water, which I lacked sorely, nor did I see anything in the form of food. I set forth hobbling, but after a time my bruises seemed to be less painful and I could move with more dispatch.

I expected that when I had come to the far end of the moor that I would come in sight of houses, or a town, or at least a farm, but the far end receded, and the more I walked, the farther away it seemed. At last it penetrated to my dull mind that the edge of the moor did not recede, but that the farther I walked, the more of the waste I could see, and that the dismal solitude might be a day's journey in extent.

With this sad thought in mind I sat down, and fanned myself with my hat, for it was coming on to be hot. Now sitting down stiffened me, so that when I started out again, I was in as sorry case as before, and I began to make up my mind that I was going to die in the desolate waste and something in the back of my mind told me that the viscount had known it when he had left me there and taken my horse.

Finally, when I was indeed ready to give up and to lay down and die, I perceived a high road in the distance and this, cheering me, I pressed forward and at last came out on it. Then I sat down by the roadside until some conveyance should come along that would take me to an inn. There went by very soon a great wain, laden with hogsheads of spirits, and upon this I climbed, the driver, who walked at his horses' heads, grinning at me the while. After a time he dropped back and tried to converse with me, but upon my shaking my head as a sign that I had no understanding of his language, he grinned once more and said nothing after that, but whistled to his horses, and flung stones for his dog to chase.

AT SUNSET we came to the walls of a city of considerable size. I have since learned that this was Mechlin, although I did not know it at the time. We went in and at the first inn we went by, I jumped down, waved my hand to the wagoner and went in. There was a very heiferish maiden with her hands full of mugs that bounced at me, and I indicated by pointing my thumb down my throat that I wanted something to drink and by resting my cheek on my hands that I wanted a bed. She nodded her head and very shortly the man of the house appeared and looked very darkly at me.

"What's the matter with you?" I demanded. "All that I wish is a bed and a little supper and a mug of ale or beer or what you have. There is no need for this glaring."

Thereupon the man of the house addressed a few words to me that I understood, of course, as well as he had understood mine. He perceived after a while that I did not know what he said, for he stopped and looked helplessly about.

"Look!" said I, and I went through the motions of drinking, eating, and going to sleep with my head on my hand.

The man of the house nodded with understanding, then he took some copper coins from his pocket and clinked them together. Then he spun one on the table and putting it in his eye, winked at me with the other. From this I understood that he wished to see the color of my money.

"Oh, is that the trouble?" said I. "Well, because a man is a little dusty and travel worn, and his clothes a bit torn, is no sign that he has no money. Here, how much do you want?"

I put my hand into the pocket of my coat where I carried my money in a leather pouch. The pocket was empty. The other pocket was also. At this I took off my hat and looked into it very foolishly. The hat was broken and bent, where the cherubic officers had beaten it about my ears, but there was no money in it. After that I took up my valise, which I wore about my shoulders by a strap, and opened it. My two shirts and other things were there safe enough, but no money, and I knew very well there was none there when I undid the buckles.

"Ha ha!" laughed the man of the house and slapping his hand upon the board, he turned his back upon me and went away.

It is to be supposed that I walked out to the street, but I do not remember doing so, simply that one minute I sat in the inn, and the next I found myself on the pavement, wandering up the street. Here I was, lame and sore, night coming on, in a strange city, where I could not understand a word of the language, and knew not a single soul, and above and beyond and, moreover, penniless.

I had no doubt that I had been robbed. The pockets of my coat buttoned with three buttons and there was not the slightest chance that the pouch had fallen out. There was no hole in the pocket so that it had not fallen through. No, I had been robbed, and by some one who had had plenty of time to do it, for he had buttoned the pocket again. When had it been done. The day before I had paid for our noon meal, so that it must have been done between that time and this. Either while I lay in the midden, or while I lay on the moor.

"Mmm," thinks I, "my merry viscount hath done this! The doctor said he was a thief and a liar and so he is. I will wager that he had my purse and trotted my horse to make me ill and ready to fall off and stay by the wayside, while he went on with both horse and money."

This was a disaster indeed, for I knew not how far I was from the coast, and even if I should win to it, and be able to get passage to England on the strength of my discharge, I would have no money when I landed, and would starve to death while I was finding a means of livelihood.

"Some day," thought I, "I will be upon the track of this fine viscount, and if the men that passed me on the moor have left anything of him worth killing, I shall finish him."

The first and most pressing need was for me to find a place of refuge for the night. I came after a time to a narrow court, with a pile of casks under a shed, and I turned into it to lie down under the little cover that the shed gave. However, as I went in, I perceived an old woman regarding me very angrily from a window in the building opposite, so I went on, for if I stayed in the shed she might set the watch on me, for an idler and a loiterer.

This night, I think, was quite the saddest one that I had spent for a long time, for I was all alone and sick and sore, and very bruised in spirit as well as body, to think that a man whom I had trusted should do me such a scurvy trick.

After a time I found that my walking had carried me into the central part of the city, to the great square, off which were the markets and in back of the markets a great number of wains and carts. The carters were sitting about and though some of them looked curiously at me, the darkness hid my torn and dusty clothes, and I kept my sword under the skirt of my coat and so they saw nothing strange about me.

I would have lain down under any of the carts, but there was so much mud that I could not, so I climbed into one after awhile and lay in the bottom and if the owner objected, then let him try his luck at throwing me out.

"Thank Heaven," said I, "I can sleep this night, and then tomorrow will be another day."

I breakfasted the next day on some turnips that I managed to extract from a basket and then I set out. By inquiring of passersby, simply saying the word Williamstadt, which city was the one the viscount was to meet me at, I finally discovered a man who had the sense to know what I wanted. He pointed me out the road I was to follow, which I did, and after crossing the rest of the town, I came to a gate, and set out upon the road that went north.

CHAPTER IV

OF AN UNCERTAIN VOYAGE

I WAS seven days upon the road. Some of the time I rode, but most of the time walked. The heat was the most horrible that I have ever known, and at midday it was so intense that a man must lie down and let its worst fury pass before he could go on again. The first part of the journey was over the same wild desolate moorland that I had crossed the day after I had been robbed. After a time, however, the country road came into woods and then I made faster progress, both because it was cooler and because my hurts were healing.

While I was upon the road I had much leisure to think of my situation and I remembered that I had the viscount's wadset in my valise and I made up my mind that when I came to Williamstadt I would sell it. As for meeting the viscount there, I had as much hope of that as a sutler of heaven.

I came within sight of the city at sundown one day, but I had not the strength to go on, so I lay down under a tree and put off going forward until the next day. After I had spent the night—and an unpleasant one it was, for it was coming on to be cold—I shaved and freshened my clothing as much as I could and cleaned a spot or two of rust from the Picinino in case I should have need of it.

Then I set out, very hopeful to see the sea at last, though I found out later that it was yet some way off. I was more than passing thin, for between what I could steal and what I could beg, and what I had been able to buy with a few pieces of money that I had found in my fobs, I had had little enough to eat.

I was sore bewildered by the great amount of water they have in that country, for the latter part of the journey I had done nothing but cross rivers, or arms of the sea, for they smelled very salt, and there was yet another one to get over before I could come to Williamstadt. However, I passed it over, giving my last coin to the ferryman, who bit upon it, and turned up his nose, but finally took it and so at last I was come to Williamstadt and at the end as I hoped, of my journey by land.

I HAD devised, while I was trudging across the moors, that I would go down to the docks when I had come to Williamstadt and find out some British skipper, and from him get directions where the Kipstraat was, and where I might find a money-changer that would buy the wadset. To this skipper, when he should be found, I also meant to apply for passage to England, offering to work my way and help in the handling of the ship if it were necessary, though I knew rather less of ships business than a cow of musketry. However, let him find it out when we were at sea, and I doubted not that I could learn anyway.

There were a great many boats and ships and all manner of sailing craft tied to the wharfs and lying in the river. I could tell fairly well what country they were from by their names. Those that bore saints' names I knew were not English and others had jumbles of letters that were unintelligible to me. I saw one named *Martha and John*, but there was no one aboard her save a boy, who replied with ribaldry when I asked when the master would return.

I came to the end of that part of the wharfs and turned back again toward the city, up what I thought was a way along a river bank, I found, however, that this was another arm of the harbor and that it shortly turned again and there was a very quiet basin, quite large, and reaching as far as I could see.

I halted to look about and saw just below me a fat, strong looking craft, a fishing boat, perhaps, for there was a great tangle of nets in the bottom of her. The middle was all open, but in the back part was a deck, and the roof of a cabin, where the company lived. There was a red-faced, hearty looking man sitting on the cabin roof, smoking a pipe, and looking up at the sky.

He had every look to me of an Englishman and I was about to cry out to him, when my eye lighted on the boat's name, painted on the bow. She was called the *Wel Tevreden*. I was singularly disappointed by this, although I did not know why, and I was turning away with a very heavy heart, when the ruddy-faced man cried out to me.

"Halloa!" he cried, "this be ship youm lookin' for!"

"Is it though?" said I, astonished to hear this man cry out in good old English tones.

"Aye," said he, nodding his head violently. "I knowed un as soon as I see un with bundle and great sword. Peter, lad, here's one come a reddy."

A shock head came out of a hole behind the roof and a great flat face like a moon looked at me.

"I am looking for a passage to England," said I, doubtfully. "Do you think I could get one on your ship?'

"Aye," they said, both laughing heartily. "Come aboard."

I thereupon jumped down onto the deck and shook the red-faced man by the hand. It appeared that his name was Giles, and that he owned the ship and that he had been awaiting me for some time.

"That can hardly be," said I. "How do you know I am the one you have been waiting for?"

At this question there was great grinning and guffawing, and when the red-faced man was able, he straightened up and then touched the hilt of the Picinino. Thereat he leered at me very wisely. Well, if he felt that way, it was no business of mine, and since he seemed to know what he was about, I did not show him my discharge, but inquired where there might be some one who would give me some money for good security.

"I know un," said Captain Giles. "Peter, lad, show gentleman to Master Reddlefield's house."

Master Reddlefield lived hard by, for his business was mostly among the seamen, I judged, and when we were come into his house which was all one place, half bed and half counting chamber, he appeared in person and asked me my pleasure.

"I have here a note of hand, secured by a wadset," said I, "upon a Scottish estate. Now I would like to know if some money might be raised upon it."

"Let me see," said Mr. Reddlefield.

I thereupon tendered him the wadset.

"I perceive," said he, after a great deal of squinting and pursing his lips, "that this is a wadset upon the castle and lands of Drumcleaugh, for the sum of five hundred pound Scots.* How did ye come by this?"

"I loaned some money to a man and this was his security."

"I doubt if ye can raise a penny on it this side Channel," said the man, pursing his lips. "No, I know ye canna. Do ye know anything of this gentleman's family, or name, or his whereabouts now?"

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* The pound Scots was only worth a shilling of English money.

"No," said I, "that I don't. His name is the Viscount of Barnet, and he told me that he would meet me at the sign of the *Gaper* in the Kipstrasse of Williamstadt, but I do not know where it is."

Here the man Jem roared aloud, and even the sour-faced Reddlefield cracked a smile.

"Man, yer two feet stand in the middle of the place ye are looking for," said he, and taking me to the street, he showed me a great Turk's head over the door.

"Do you know anything of this man?"

"Something," said he, going in again. "He sailed for England this day week."

After that I began to curse and to swear and finally the sour-faced man called a halt.

"Hoots, toots," said he, "ye'll ha' the —— amongst us if ye do not leave off such awfu' talk. What gars ye curse like that?"

"Because I have been fooled and cheated and have walked all these weary miles and have not a penny to my name."

"How is that?" asked he, putting his head on one side.

"Why, you said the wadset was worthless."

"On this side of the water. On this side of the water. But now if ye wad like to part with one of those bit jewels on your finger, I might be your man."

But jewels on my finger! Ah, what a fool! Here I had the two rings and had forgotten them entirely. Well, I had them off, and after a deal of haggling, got ten pounds for the two of them, and a little enough it was. Then the sour-faced man, overjoyed at his good fortune, I suppose, at getting my rings so cheaply, sent a boy out for water and fire, and brewed us some tea.

When I exclaimed at that, Mr. Reddlefield informed me that fire, that is to say red-hot turf, and water, are sold in shops for tea brewing, and that they can be bought cheaper than "keeping a great red fire blazing a' through the hot weather."

When the tea was drunk, Mr. Reddlefield began to rub his hands and mutter about its being his busy day, so we took our leave and went back again to the boat. I ate a dinner of fish and then, feeling secure and happy for the first time since I had discovered my loss that I had been robbed, and having upon me a most delicious languor, I asked Giles where I might lodge.

"Why, here on deck, or on nets," said he.

And when I exclaimed, he informed me that there were no cabins aboard, the voyage being so short, and that any passenger who felt the need of sleep might lie on the nets, which were soft enough. So I clambered down into the mid part of the ship and lay down, and putting my old broken hat over my face, went to sleep.

I MUST have been more weary than I thought, for when I awakened, the boat was heaving under me and the fresh cold wind from the sea blowing down into the boat. On opening my eyes I perceived that the great sail had been set and the wind blowing against it was deflected into the bottom part of the boat where I lay, and so strongly as to near tear the hair from my head. I got up, and with some difficulty clambered up to the deck.

It was quite dark, but there was a kind of light from the sea and upon looking about I could see that we were sailing out of the river mouth and the shores were stretching away on either hand.

I turned from watching the low shore and perceived that there were three men seated on the roof of the cabin. I had thought them to be Giles and his son, when I had come up, but seeing three of them, and closer at hand, I made out that they were different persons. One of them rose and came over to me.

"Good evening, sir," said he, very civilly. "A pleasant night, though a little chill."

"It is indeed," said I, "for this season of the year."

"There are some of us will be colder than this before this business is dispatched."

"Aye," I muttered, not knowing in the least what he meant.

"But that is a small enough sacrifice," went on the other man, "if we can only bring the wronged into their own again."

Now as he talked, something of this man's tone struck a familiar note in my ear and I was so diligently searching my brain to think where I had heard it before that I lost track of what he was saying and could only mutter, "That is true."

He must have perceived this, for he came very close to me and looking me intently in the face, said—

"You understand me, of course?"

"No, sir," said I, "I do not—not a word."

And at that moment I remembered him. It was he who had spoken to me in the doctor's house and had been the leader of the band that had fought with the patrol before Frankfort. It seemed to me that he recognized me also, for he fell back a step.

"Ha! the dragoon!" said he. "Williamstadt hath become as popular a port of departure as Ostend. First the viscount, and now the dragoon."

The other two men now came and ranged behind him and I, noticing them making slight motions of their hands, bucked forward my Picinino, so that it clanked very loudly on the deck. At once their swords whistled and I warrant you that mine was out as soon as any.

I perceived, though, that I was at a disadvantage, for I had nothing to my back but the open well of the mid part of the ship, which protected it well enough, for they could not come at me by that way, but if I so much as set back a foot to balance myself, or to draw beyond reach of an eager thrust, I would be overset and fall off the deck, and so come to my end with a broken neck. Nevertheless, I would let the blood of one or two of them at least. Unfortunately, at this moment, the man who had been speaking stepped between us, his sword still undrawn and his hands held palm upward.

"Gentleman," said he very sternly, "let no one forget his position here! It is I who commands that swords be drawn and when they shall be put away. There is no cause for quarrel here. Put up, I say!"

"What was she doing rattling steel here for?" muttered one of the men. "Hersel' would rattle a few."

Now this man was a Highlander, I knew by his speech and immediately I guessed that these three were Jacobites and I was considerably cast down, for the best I could see out of it was a cut throat.

"My good man," began the leader, "put up your sword. We are all friends here, I trust, and there is not the slightest occasion for naked steel. We are, as you perceive, three, and I assure you we are not poor swordsmen. Your name is Hugh Bancroft, is it not, of Ligoniers?"

I answered that it was.

"That, I believe, is the Seventh, and I understand that that regiment belongs to the Scottish establishment? Is that not so?"

"I do not know," said I. "If there was any such thing it must have been before I was born."

"Umph!" said he. "Well, I was leading up to ask you if you were not Scotch by birth."

"Well, and what then?" I asked.

"Simply this, that having been tossed out of the army like an old sack, and still being young and full of life, and doubtless thirsting for a career of arms, and being Scotch, after all d'ye see, I know of an occupation that would fit a man of your kidney."

Then he put his head upon one side like a bird, and though it was too dark for me to be sure, I was certain that he smiled upon me.

"Come," said he, "why not?"

"Well, I will tell you," I replied. "First off, I have been tossed out like an old sack, as you have said. And having gotten well out of one army, I am not like to get into another one easily. I have seen that in my short life that would sicken me of armies all the rest of it, though I lived to be Methuselah's grandsire. Cursed and —— and maltreated at home by the very people we protect, and robbed and starved abroad, and our own officers stealing the clothes from our back and the pay from our pockets.

"So for a career of arms, I have had my fill of it. And as for being Scotch, I was born in Chillingham, and have little enough of liking for anything Scotch. They are rick burners and cattle lifters all, for all their high sounding names." So I went on, for my blood was up and the other two grinding their teeth. "And I will have none of them. And as for this career that you would tempt me with, I am a true subject of King George, and were I not, I would rather be the slave of a man that leads his troops in battle and fights by his son's side in the van, than be the friend and companion of one that hath not the heart of a hare, but that skulks in Italy, like a dog under a shed."

There was a space of silence then, in which I could hear breath whistling. Then forward steps a man.

"My name," said he, very painfully and panting, as if he tore out each word by the roots from his very heart, "is MacDonald, of Clanranald. I give you the lie in your teeth."

Thereupon the Highlander stepped up.

"Her name," he began very calmly, "is Dugald Vich—" something or other, what it was I did not know, but something outlandish, and sounding like a smith rasping a hoof—"called Dugald of the Axe. Her blood for the red-soldiers."

"You are spies and listeners and creepers about," said I, "and three to one, but I have the right on my side. Be —— to you and all your beggarly kind."

THE Highlander made such a sweep at me then that he near knocked my sword from my hand, and as I parried a thrust from the MacDonald man, tried to run under my sword and dirk me, so that I was obliged to kick him in the face. Here the third man began beating down our swords and crying on us to stop, and Giles and his son appearing with lanthorns and great horse pistols, I began to despair of a successful outcome of the fight.

"Put up!" cried the third man. "Said I not that there would be no fighting with this man? Put up! Are ye all gone mad? You, Dugald, a chief, would you peril your cause on the chancy outcome of a brawl with a common soldier? MacDonald, have you no sight of the value of your life that you throw it away on such a cast? And you, my loyal booby of a dragoon, you should have a better sense than to be insulting the men that are taking you to England, and that have more than once saved the life of you. Put away your swords, I say; you will have your belly full of fighting ere ever we see Corry Arrack again. Now will ye put up, or must I have Giles pistol the lot of you?"

They fell back sullenly enough, their swords resting on the deck, and the Highlander muttering in his own tongue.

"I have had enough of Englishmen," said MacDonald sourly. "The viscount that we thought would join us hath stolen our papers, and this dragoon will probably be the death of us if his throat is not cut."

"That we will see about," said the leader, very bitterly. "Do you and Dugald Axe go apart a way. A word with you, sir."

And he led me to the opposite side of the deck. Giles and his son, seeing us peaceable, went off, being busy with the ship, and the leader of the three men began to whisper in my ear.

"Before I say any more," he began, "tell me where you left your companion."

"Outside Brussels," said I, "and I have not seen him since, though I would like passing well to get my hands about his throat."

"Ah," said the other, rubbing his hands, and looking at me very close, "and why should that be?"

"Because he hath robbed me, as I have good reason to believe."

"Robbed you, say you? Tell us about it! How did he do it? By stealth, I'll promise you, for your viscount is a stealthy creature."

"Well, I am not sure that he did it, but things point that way."

I then told him of the fight in the inn, and of how I had discovered that I had been robbed and of the weary way I had dragged myself across the dunes, with money enough in the jewel on my finger to have brought me in a coach and six.

"I doubt it," said he; "there was no place inland where you could have sold those things. But your viscount, have you no notion of where he went?"

"No," said I, "except that he took ship a week ago and Mr. Reddlefield is the man that speeded him."

"I knew that," said the other man. "Reddlefield would sell the —— passage to England, if he were paid enough."

"Does he own this vessel?"

"No. This boat is owned by honest or dishonest Giles, who doth business by carrying the friends of the right party from shore to shore, along with a bit of tobacco and lace and a pipe or two of wine that never sees the King's Gagers. And Master Reddlefield hath a hand in that, too, you may be certain. He hath a good Scot's tongue and can speak French and Flemish, and draws many a fat fish into his net."

"When I came aboard," said I, "the man Giles said that he had been expecting me. Do you know anything of that?"

"None," he replied, "except that Giles had knowledge of us and saw you with a Highland sword on your hip, and looking very like the chief of a powerful clan or the head of an ancient house, so ragged were you and forlorn and fatigued withal. There is many a poor man wanders about that might have been sitting in his own hall, but for that he danced a dance with the Earl of Mar in the Fifteen.

"But we coming upon the scene, Giles perceived his error and pointing you out to us, was for throwing you overboard, all sleeping as you were. But I objected for I recognized you at once, both by your frame and by your sword. 'He is the man will lead us to the viscount,' thought I, 'and if not, then a lusty recruit for the good cause, a happy acquisition, for your fame has been widespread in the army."

Now here the good man stubbed his toe, for my fame had gone no farther than the provost's officers, with whom I have had glory enough. Neither had he recognized me before, as I well knew. However, he could not see me laugh in the darkness.

"How do you know," said I, "that I will not denounce you to the first king's officer we see after we land?"

"Mark me," said he, laying his head on one side again. "It were peril of your neck. For then, I should feel it my duty to point out the man who slew an officer of His Majesty's horse in Bavaria, and another one in Flanders. Aha! I pricked you there, did I? And if I pointed out that the man you did to death in the inn before Brussels was cousin to my Lord Stair, what would you give for your chances before a court?"

"It was not I that slew him, it was the viscount!" I cried desperately.

Thereat the Jacobite gave a dry chuckle. "Who is to know that?" said he. "Can it be proven?"

My silence said that it could not and I must own I was considerably cast down, more so than I like to think upon, for I saw that this sorry thing would overshadow me all my life, that the officer of the patrol had been slain and after him the captain of horse in the inn in Flanders, and though I had not struck a blow at either, I had been present, and who was to know that I had not done the killing?

"Come," said the man, "referring again to the matter of a military career, "I must tell you that I am for England, to go about amongst men of some standing and see how they lean toward a rising in favor of the old party. What with the king's espousing the Hanoverian cause so roundly and the cursed troops being quartered on every honest man, and press gangs going about like ravening wolves, I think we can get up a little feeling.

"Now I have here a wild Highland cateran, fit more for the driving of cattle than the accompaniment of a gentleman on a delicate errand, and a hot-headed officer of the Scots Brigade, who has not a thing in his head but military terms and fighting, and a reeking Scotch burr to his speech. We have left our servants behind and you and I, who speak good English of either king, could go about together, and these other two be our servants, and so have no need of opening their mouths in public."

"I will have none of it," said I. "I am done with soldiering and as for your king, I would not spit on him."

The Jacobite leaped halfway across the deck and then leaped back again to my side.

"I am a man of few words, my buck," he hissed. "You join us or you hang. I am out two pound ten for your passage to England and I promise you that I will see you lain by the heels, or else a Jacobite this time tomorrow night!"

Then with no further word he turned his back on me and went to where his companions sat on the cabin roof.

NOW here was a sorry coil. Unless I threw in my lot with these Jacobites, they would have me arrested and I might find myself put to it to come free again. True, I could come back at them by denouncing them as spies, but that would be little help, for there were many Jacobite sympathizers in England then, and much more open about it and brazen, too, than they were a year or two later, after their cause had been lost.

By this time we were coming out into the open sea, where the strength of the waves began to be felt, and the boat beginning to heave and roll and wallow in the waves like a sow, I fell ill, and went down and lay on the nets, and was soon weary of my life.

I comforted myself with the thought that the voyage would not be long, and that my sufferings would not endure after the morning, but in this I was wrong. There was considerable force of wind blowing against the boat, so that it was necessary to sail now this way and now that, in order to beat against it. The moon-faced man and Giles sweated at the great sail and a third man of the crew that I had not seen before called out to them from the rear part of the boat where he held the rudder, and between times they ran back and forth across the nets and trampled me grievously.

Day came in a squall of rain, sweeping across the hills of water like pikemen at a charge with their pikes held straight up.

The ocean came into the boat over the sides and Giles set us all to bailing, throwing it out again with pails and piggins, but we were of little help, for the Jacobites, Highland chief and all, were as sick as I was, and could but lean against the boat's side and groan, and sometimes throw over a bucket of water.

I thought to see the boat's company apprehensive and afraid of the raging sea, but they seemed to take it calmly enough and smoked horrid, stinking pipes and swung their legs from the deck when they were not setting or taking in the sail.

"Giles," cried the leader of the Jacobites at last, "will we ever come to land? Is there much danger? Tell me, for I am for taking to my prayers if there is. I have much to answer for and it will take me a little time."

Giles, however, being at sea, and master of the ship, only laughed uproariously in the man's face and informed him finally that there was a slight head wind, a mere breeze, that would delay them only a little while, and that they would come under the land at sunset.

So we spent a weary day, wet to the hide with rain and salt water, and at last, as it was falling dark, we perceived the coast close at hand and in a short time drew into a bay, or inlet, where the sail was let go, and the boat allowed to drift. The rain had stopped some time before, but it was very dark by the time we came into the bay.

Giles went into the forward part of the boat, bearing with him a lantern in a cloak, and this he uncovered twice in the direction of the shore, as I could see by the light falling on the water and then disappearing. At length, when he had done this several times, far up the beach another light blinked twice. Then the light went down along the water side, like a falling star, only much slower, as the man that carried it walked down a path.

When the light had gotten to the water's edge, it went out, but in a little while we heard the beat of oars and there were two boats under the side. There was some debate between the leader of the Jacobites and Giles as to whether the cargo should be landed first, or the passengers, and there was great argument. In the midst of this, Jem, the moon-faced man, who was in the after part of the boat, on the cabin roof, gave a great cry.

The bay ran up under the shore to a river mouth, and we could see, some way inland, a great fire, new kindled, that blazed and leaped and swelled brighter and brighter. Giles gave a cry and ran to the other side of the boat. Ere he had reached it, a second fire twinkled, farther up the coast. Thereat Jem and Giles and the third man at once began to hoist up the sail and the men in the boat were shoving off, but the leader of the spies called to them.

"Hold!" he roared. "Put us ashore! We have paid for a safe landing and ashore we shall go, though all the beacons between here and the Forth were ablaze."

"Jump down, then," cried those in the boat, and this we did, and each seized an oar.

I was encumbered with my sword, but I would not leave it behind, and though it cracked my shins as I got into the boat, I hung to it stoutly. All four of us were in one boat and the other, being lighter, drew ahead of us and got in to the shore first. They ran in, and the wind being toward us, we heard them leap out to lighten the boat and splash ashore, and then, without sound or cry, at once came a great clashing of steel, and the crash of firearms.

Sitting with our backs to the shore, we could not see what was going forward, but the men in our boat began to row the harder and it turned slightly, as I saw by the motion of the man who steered, so as to come at some other part of the beach. We bent to it with a will, the oarsmen making no sound but saving their breath for the work.

Now a little of that labor went a long way with me, for I was still weak from my wound, and the wanderings in Flanders on an empty stomach had not helped me any, so that the sweat stood out on me and I forgot my wet clothes in the pain of my arms and back and when I was ready to give in and could not even sit upright, the boat seemed to leap in air and go forward with tremendous speed.

The man at the stern worked madly and to my surprize the rowers backed water with their oars, as if to check the speed. Again the boat shot forward, there was a great cry from ashore and a musket crack very close at hand. The man who stood in the stern fell down among all the rowers, the boat leaped again, but this time the stern, having no steering oar to hold it true, swung about and the great sea that was carrying us turned the boat around, there was a shout, and we were all tumbled into the water.

I went down once, drinking more water than a fish would in a fortnight, and getting a sad rap from an oar in the meantime. As I floundered among oars and cloaks and bits of gear, and tangled with my sword, and my valise near to choking me, my hand fell upon hard ground and I found that I was only in knee-deep water. I got to my feet and had scarce done so, when a great wave rushed in and knocked me down again, but when it had passed and I had drunk my fill again, I found that I could stagger ashore beyond reach of the water.

There was a great hullabaloo up the beach, of steel and shots, and men shouting and as I lay panting I could hear men running through the water and pounding up the beach toward the fight. When I had got my breath, I got to my feet and put my sword where I could get at it.

"This is none of my fight," thinks I, "but a snarl of gagers and coast guards and smugglers. But here I am in England again and my troubles at an end."

The fight was working away from me and it did not appear to me that I should engage in it. I remembered that there was a path through the marsh here, where the man with the lanthorn had come down, and I set out to find it, the water squelching in my boots, and running from me in streams. I would never have found the path, but that some men ran by me and I heard their feet over the stones, and then going farther and farther away from me, so I turned about and going over that way, found the path and followed it very carefully through a marsh to dry land.

WHEN I had come out upon the moor, I was astonished to see beacons blazing all along the sky, four or five of them, and more that could not be seen, though their light burned against the clouds. The wind brought to me a clamor of bells, ringing and ringing, such as would hardly be if the French had invaded us.

I began to be afraid at this, for if the country were up at our landing it was only a matter of time before we should be laid by the heels, but I comforted myself with the thought that I was an honest soldier, that I had my discharge in my pocket, if it were not ruined with sea water, and that my conscience was clear.

While I was thinking this I came to a crossroad and, as I thought which to follow, a crowd of people came around a turn, and seeing me standing there, seized my arm and dragged me along with them. They were armed with guns and swords and scythes, and hedge bills, and a kind of pike, made of a sickle on a long pole, and as they hurried along they brandished these in air, and the bells clamored and the fire from the distant beacons glinted on the gun barrels and showed me their set faces.

"Come with us," cried those who held me. "We'll show 'e the way Peter Stiles has been pressed! Got un in Justice Dawley's house! We'll show they —— lobster-backs! Peter Stiles, that keeps the Danes-Head and draws better ale than any man in Norfolk! We'll show un!"

We hurried along and coming down a little slope, saw below us a dense mass of blackness that wiggled and moved and showed itself to be a crowd of men.

"Soldiers!" cried a man with us, and the men below us raised a deep shout and opened fire.

"If those be soldiers," thinks I, "they are —— poorly drilled, for their fire was as ragged as my coat."

The party that I was with fell back into the fields again and were at a loss what to do. Some cried to go around the other way by the Newmarket road, and others shouted to go across the fields and cross the stream lower down, by which I gathered that the soldiers held a bridge. There came up at this moment a man and plucked me by the sleeve.

"Are you a citizen of these parts?" asked he.

"No, I am not," I answered. "I was going by about my business and these good people prevailed upon me to accompany them in this folly, though I have not the slightest idea of what it is about."

"I thought by your look that you were perhaps a stranger, and by your wet clothes I perceive you have been lately upon the beach. Have no fear, I am a man that minds his own affairs. But a word in your ear: These yokels, these chaw-bacons, these apple-shakers, are like to put themselves in a fair way to be all hanged."

"How so?"

"Why, marry, in this manner: An officer and a corporal in the town, being sorely tried that they could find no recruits, and wishing themselves well away, proceeded to get good Peter Stiles, who keeps the Danes-Head Inn, most very high gravel, well-deep drunk, and on his own ale. Thereat he was taken before Justice Dawley and enlisted as a private. His wife, wailing and crying, rushed about the town and squawled that her man had been stolen, and in a short time people having run out to the farms and outlying villages, the beacons were kindled and half the county up to rescue Peter."

"Well, this is no chestnut for me to burn myself dragging out of the fire," said I, "and at the first opportunity I must take French leave of them and be on my own way as fast as may be."

"Softly," said the other man, "softly. I am the squire and hold some measure of authority under the king here. It becomes my duty to put down this mob. Now if I were to address them here, it would probably result in a cut throat for me, and the riot go on just the same. But if I had a man to assist me, though he were a deserter from the army, a French spy, or a Jacobite rogue, and newly landed, I would give him such a safe conduct as would take him into the very court of the king without let or hindrance."

"And if he did not—" said I.

"Ah! England is a small country and I promise you that the soldiers will be here shortly from Languard Fort, only too eager to hang a man such as I have described. Indeed, I have sent for them this hour agone."

"Do you have any idea what regiment the recruiters are from?"

"None, save that they are dragoons and lately from Germany."

"Well, if they are dragoons," said I, "I am with you heart and hand to give these boys a chance out of their predicament. However, there doth not seem to be much need of us, if there are soldiers at the bridge below us."

"They are not," said the man contemptuously. "They are another party of drunken yokels like these about us."

Here, some hothead cried out that we should charge the men about the bridge, who having fired at us again, would have their pieces empty and at that the whole crowd of them rush down the hill, the squire and I well behind them, you may be sure. The two parties met on the bridge and there was a wild howl and a brave rapping of skulls, and very soon howls of a different note.

The party on the bridge seemed to flee, and ours was pushed ahead after a few exultant cries, and crossed the bridge. They climbed up the other side and my companion and I were on the bridge, when there was another shout and a view halloo, and cries of "hark away!" and back rushed upon us the men who had crossed the bridge, pursued by the hostile party.

The railing of the bridge gave way, such was the press upon it, and I, being caught on the bridge, and having my arm around the neck of a man who had been trying to reap my head from my shoulders with a hedge bill, went over into the water, where he let go soon enough.

The water was shallow, being only a brook, but so many fell in, and pawed about in the blackness and splashed, and shouted, and got up and fell down, that they were soon all as wet as I. By this time the bacon-chawers had begun to discover their mistake and that they were fighting not soldiers, but each other. This seemed to spur them to redoubled efforts. "I be as good a man as you, Joe Cobbles!" panted one near me that wrestled and fell from brook to shore and back again.

"You be too brash for a Yarmouth man!" cried another, and smote his antagonist in the midst of his face. I got out of the brook and back on the road again, and looked about for the squire or justice or whatever he was, but saw no sign of him, so I proceeded up the hill and across the next field toward the cluster of houses that were outlines against a fire and from whence came a clamor of bells and much shouting.

IN THE village there was a shifting mob drawn up about a fire kindled in the street. Men kept coming in continually from the country armed in the same fashion as those I had met earlier in the evening. Women were standing on the outskirts, or tugging at some man's arm, and the small boys of the place swarmed about, shrieking.

I gathered from the talk that the officers had defended themselves in a house that was a little apart, and that the people were waiting for reinforcements from the surrounding towns ere they made their attack. I went down the street a short distance to a corner, where eight or ten men, all armed with guns, stood guard, and was shown the house.

It was a little larger than the rest and the windows all shuttered. There was a dark lump in the road before it that looked like a man's body, and from the looks and speech of the men on guard, I could see that they had little stomach for making the attack. As for me, I wondered who was making the house good, and if they were soldiers that I knew, and what regiment they were from. It was ill that former comrades of mine should be run to earth by such poor things as these countrymen, but unless more troops arrived, or help came from some other quarter, I could not see how they would come free.

As I went sadly back I perceived my squire standing just outside the first light, and so I went over to him.

"This is worse than ever," said he, perceiving me. "They have gotten the man's wife out, and she is to harangue the crowd, and broach a cask of ale, and when they have all gotten drunk, they will attack the house. What folly is it that made these soldiers do such a thing? Do they set a recruit above their lives?"

"No," I replied, "but the cost of raising these recruits is so high and they run away so fast after they are raised, that many a man has been ruined by being sent on recruiting duty. He must pay the parish officer for the recruit's feeding, although the parish is given money for that purpose by the state, and he must get him to his regiment, and what with this and that, a recruit is sometimes worth nine or ten pounds by the time he joins.

"Supposing that an officer has gotten three or four recruits and paid their subsistence money, and given them their shilling, and dragged them about with him and they have run away in the end, he is very like to be desperate, and driven to any end to get others, even to getting the landlord of the inn where he lodges drunk and enlisting him."

"He is like to pay dearer for that recruit than for any other," observed the squire. "Look there."

Some men had rolled out a cask into the square and unheaded it with a mattock. Thereat the company eagerly pressed forward, so that each might have a drink at the expense of the man they were going to save. A woman, who I judged was his wife, handed it out in jack and can and harangued them bitterly the while. They jostled and shoved and spilled the ale on each other and I began to see that this was like to fall into a drunken carouse.

"Yell, and shout, and get drunk, I suppose," said I, "and when they have got their courage up, attack the house. There is always some thirsty soul at times like this that suggests liquor be brought out."

"It was my thought," said the squire. "I was the man who suggested it."

"You?"

"Indeed me. For when they get drunk they will attack and if a friend of the officers has already been in and told them of the plan, they may then escape, and mingle with the crowd and, so get safely away. The country people will be drunk and the night dark and the fight they began at the bridge will be continued here. There is already considerable bad blood on account of it and each side accuses the other of having begun it. Look now! Here comes the picket they posted at the street end. Now is the time."

The men who had been watching the house hurried by. They had left one of their number on watch, but he kept casting longing looks at the crowd about the cask and paid little heed to the house. So then, by going a roundabout way, through the fields, I was able to come into the yard, where I fell over some hen-bawks, and so to the door of the house, where a very stern voice ordered me to halt.

"Friend," said I. "A dragoon of Ligoniers."

"Come in," said the man cheerily enough, and I heard him unchaining the door. I went in, into a house as dark as a pocket, and had a pistol shoved into my face while I was questioned on the army a bit. When I was done answering, the other man gave a great laugh and clapped me on the shoulder.

" 'Tis Hugh Bancroft!" he cried. "Ha-ha, I heard you were dead and gone! And so you will help us make the house good against the mob? Hark to their howling!"

He peered out of the back window and then returned to me.

"Come in to the citadel," he exclaimed, and going to the fireplace, took a candle out from under a bucket and led me into the front part of the house.

Then he turned and I recognized my old comrade, Dashbaugh.

"Enough!" cried some one, "slay no

fatted calves here! There is sober work. To your post, corporal!"

"My old comrade, Hugh Bancroft, the hero of Dettingen, Lieutenant Napier," said Dashbaugh. "Have a pistol, Hugh. I must to my watch again."

He pointed to the table, where were laid out a sword, a fowling piece and a brace of dueling pistols. Both he and the lieutenant had a brace of horse pistols and there was a little store of powder and bullets at hand. Then Dashbaugh was gone.

When my eyes became yet more accustomed to the darkness, I saw a man sitting by the table, his head in his hands. At first I thought this was the landlord, but I perceived another man on the floor, smelling most outrageously of strong waters, and breathing heavily, and I changed my mind. The man at the table was probably the owner of the house in a great fright.

"Lieutenant," I began, "I was sent in by the squire here and he hath done his best to get the mob drunk, so that when they attack, they will most likely make a sorry mess of it and in the confusion you and Dashbaugh may get safely away."

"I would rather stay and make the house good," said he.

"I think it doubtful if it can be done. I perceive that the ammunition is low here and there are a great many outside, and more coming in all the time. Troops have been sent for and they may possibly get here before the mob attacks."

"I doubt it much," said he. "They must come from either the Languard Fort or from Yarmouth, both of which places are somewhat far distant. Moreover, we have this recruit who is more than stiff drunk and I like not to have to carry him. Hark! ——, they come on! Look to the window!"

The faint hurly-burly of cries about the keg had ceased and instead was a low, angry muttering, unpleasant to hear, and worse to think upon. Light began to glimmer through the shutters and on peering out, I could see the crowd turning the corner, bearing torches and crying to each other to come on.

My friend, the squire, must have misjudged the temper of the mob, for they had not waited very long by the keg. I caught up a pistol from the table and took my stand at the window. We heard no word from Dashbaugh and so decided that his part of the house was unassailed. The mob came on, a man in front with a gun cheering them, and as they came up to the door, without preliminary, the lieutenant discharged his pistol and the man in front fell down into the dust. Those in front halted in confusion, but were pushed along by their friends in rear, so turned very nimbly in among the houses on the opposite side of the street.

AT THAT minute up blazed up a very great light and we heard the crash of Dashbaugh's pistols. I skipped out to the back and found that a hay rick in the yard had been fired and that we were taken in rear by a party who had come across the fields and who were firing very heavily by the light of the rick. The shutters were not overstrong and balls came through them, so that it was very dangerous to be there in that part of the house.

There came now another howl from the men in front of the house, which we paid no attention to unless the lieutenant should call for aid, but continued to fire at any that showed themselves on our side. The attackers now began to howl in good earnest and their fowling pieces and muskets banged away in grand style.

"Hold a minute!" shouted Dashbaugh in my ear. "There is some one trying to pry the shutter on the dark side of the house."

We stepped that way and sure enough there was a rapping and a prying at the shutter.

"Dup," said Dashbaugh, meaning open it, "while I stave in his brains."

I cautiously undid the fastenings and of a sudden threw open the shutter. There was a man there and I was just in time to prevent Dashbaugh from putting steel into him.

"Here! The man is a friend!" I cried, for I could tell that it was my squire. "What now?"

"Unhand me!" bellowed Dashbaugh, "Let me split him! Unhand me or else get to the window yourself!"

"Let me in!" pleaded the squire, so I gave him a hand and he vaulted over the low sill. "I did my best," said he, "but they would brook no delay. The woman is a ——. She gave them enough to make them ugly and then urged them on, but they would have more ale first, whereat she overset the keg and so it was all at an end. They have come down in two parties, one to take you in the rear and the other in front."

"We know that already," said I. "Hear the shooting? We are neither deaf nor blind."

"Ha-ha!" he cried, "this is the richest yet. The fools that came first fired mightily and those coming up in the rear of the house perforce received some of the bullets. Then certain of them, remembering the fight at the bridge and having but ill will toward those who live up Yarmouth way, returned the fire, calling out treachery, so that they now fight each other across the house. Do your companions take off their uniforms and wait until the rick dies out and then run and all will yet be well."

"I say, Corporal," cried the lieutenant, coming out from the front part of the house, "they are fighting amongst themselves! Here is a chance for a sally!"

"That is just what the squire has said," I told them. "There is a press there and if you can find coats to cover your uniforms, then now is the time to be gone, for the rick will burn out and all will be dark in a minute or two and no one know who is friend or foe."

"But our recruit is drunk as David's sow," said the officer, "and without a recruit I will not stir a foot."

This was a sad state of affairs and we could think of no way out. Dashbaugh peeked from his window again and reported the enemy still out of sight across the yard. The officer went to the front part of the house and then returned.

"Now is the time surely!" said he, "the fire is dying out. If only we had not got the good landlord so drunk!"

At this the squire stepped forward and whispered in the officer's ear.

"Good!" cried the lieutenant. "Good! A candle here, Corporal."

A candle was brought and by its light the two explored the press that stood against the wall. They had out of it two greatcoats, and I, who was very wet and also cold, despite the excitement, helped myself to a dry coat and a hat that would replace the one I had lost in coming ashore, and both fitted me tolerably well.

The officer and Dashbaugh, calling out to me to have an eye to the window, went into the front part, where I could hear them conversing with the man who sat by the table.

"I would ask you to remember," said the squire softly to me, and looking over his shoulder, "that when you come among your friends of the right party, that you will remember that it was I who sent off the coast guard to get the troops, and so your landing was not opposed by more than a handful. They have been awaiting it this last week. And the traitor that betrayed the time and the place and the fact of your coming was a beggarly Scotch viscount, I should not say beggarly for he had money enough, but he gave the information. Barnet is his name and I would ask you to give news of the matter wherever you go. We are not as strong in these parts as I would wish, else I would have had his throat cut."

"So he has been here, has he? I would like to get hands on him. I have a word or two to say to that viscount myself. Where did he go? Have you any idea?"

"None whatever. He went away very secretly by night."

Crash! The house shook.

"They are at the door!" gasped the squire. The fire had died down quicker than we thought and I had been so interested in what the squire was saying that I had paid no heed to the window. Another crash. Dashbaugh and the officer began to fire again. The front of the house was being attacked too. Then every shutter was assailed, there was a tremendous lot of noise, and seeing the door giving way, I drew my sword and upsetting the table across the way that they would come, prepared to give them some real hospitality. The two from the front of the house ceased firing and there was great scuttling about. A hand seized my sword arm.

"Put up that thing," cried the squire. "Fool! Into the press. Do you think you are Horatius? Into the press!"

Now his words having some sense—in truth I was not very eager to have those misguided people make chaff of me—I turned and nipped into the press, where we had no sooner got and shut the door, than the door of the house broke in with a great clatter, and the shouting mob poured in.

They dashed through the room and running to the front of the house found the landlord upon the floor and lifted him up and made great noise, and more coming in through both door and window, the press was nearly crushed in by the throng. The other party entering by the front door, which had been unbarred, they all began to shout and crowd to the front part of the house, and the squire pinching my arm, we made shift to quietly open the door and go out.

The crowd flowing back into the rear part of the house, a cry was raised to find out the lobsters, the bloody-minded soldiery, and worse, so that they might be killed out of hand. Tables and chairs were overset, the press cast down, and men shouted themselves hoarse, but the soldiers were not to be found. I was carried apart from the squire and did not see him for a minute or two, when I beheld, by the light of a smoking torch, four men in a group by the window, and the next instant gone, so I believed them all to have got safe away.

"To the garret!" I called, thinking to raise a diversion. "We have not looked in the garret!"

"To the garret!" they all roared, and straightway leaped upon the ladder, but there were so many and the weight so great, that the ladder broke and cast them all to earth again. Then some of the wilder spirits raised a cry to smoke them out and going out into the street, began to throw torches on the roof.

Thereupon we all poured into the street again and this being a good time for me to depart, I did so, and was not hindered by any one, save a man on the ouskirts of the crowd who reached to stop me, but I smote him among his teeth and while he made moan, was gone.

I WAS forced to walk in the fields and to skulk under the hedgerows from time to time, for people were hurrying in the direction of the tumult and the fire, but they did not see me, so careful was I, and thinking that I could do no better than to put as much distance between myself and that ill-omened place as I could, I walked the greater part of the night at a good round pace and when the morning began to appear, graying along the moors, and the birds to twitter and the cocks crow lustily, I crept under a rick, and putting my valise under my head, proceeded to sleep, which I did until late in the day.

When I awakened it was well into the afternoon. I thought best then to call a council of war with myself and to see what should be done now that I was in England. Firstly, I drew the Picinino, and scrubbed it well with sand and a bit of stone, and so cleaned the rust from the blade. My breeches were in a sad condition, but they must do and at least covered me. The coat and hat that I had come by out of the press were not new, but they were better than those I had left and if I were not hunted for the theft of them, I might do very well with them.

The fight on the beach had given me the chance to get away from the spies and to need have little apprehension at coming upon them again. The riot had been a means of aid to us, for the coast guard being sent after troops, had not responded to the firing of the beacon and perhaps that had been the saving of all our lives, for the viscount having given news of our coming, they had probably mustered in force.

Well, then, having arrived safely, and having my small store of money yet untouched, what should I do? Go home to my own country in the north, or go down to London and see what fortune awaited me there?

After a great deal of thought I decided that I would go to London. I had no trade, but a great willingness to learn one, and if worse came to worse, then I might take ship for the colonies in America. I had thought of going up toward the north country, and seeing what I might do by way of selling the wadset, but I found upon examination that it was quite destroyed.

My discharge and a letter or two I had in my valise, wrapped in my extra shirts and the whole bound securely to my shoulder by the straps that had suspended it from my saddle, but the wadset I had put in my pocket after leaving Mr. Reddlefield's, and so the sea water had utterly ruined it. This was not a great loss, for I had begun to have little faith in its value.

So then, I would go to London, and thereupon I set out and walking sturdily, came at last to a town and an inn, where I lodged for the night. The talk in the common room was all of the mob and of the ill feeling that had arisen between the two counties of Norfolk and Suffolk on account of the riot, each county claiming that the other had taken sides against it.

They also talked of the great amount of shooting done by the besieged officers, by which I understood that perhaps after all the mob did not know that when it had its two parties attack the front and rear of the house, that each party had been firing on the other.

I set out again the next day, sometimes walking, sometimes riding in a farmer's cart, and passing the time of day with every one. They were all very eager for news, talking with the good old Suffolk whine, but not of the riot, that rumor not having reached this far, but of French agents that had been landed a day or two before, that had escaped into the Broads beyond Yarmouth and that expresses had been through the country warning the people about it.

I was much alarmed at this. If the three Jacobites had gotten away scotfree, it boded no good luck for me, and if it were found that I had come to England in their company, I might have a hard time to pass such a thing off.

On the afternoon of the fourth day ashore, when I had been by way of Tivetshall, Haughley, and Bury St. Edmunds, I came out upon the highroad to London, and as I sat down to breathe, the coach from the north country came toiling along, it being up-hill at that point. On the back of this coach was a great shelf, with a sail cloth over it, filled with bales and barrels, and called from the sound it made on the way, the "rumble-tumble."

A man might ride on this for a small price, and so as the coach passed, I went out and climbed in, thinking to make my peace with the coachman at the next stage. It was a cool day, the weather drawing on into the autumn, but the back of the coach was hot, being in the sun as it was, and I something fatigued with my hard walking, having done upward of seventy miles since I had come ashore. So pillowing my head upon a bale of woolens going down to some London merchant, I fell asleep.

CHAPTER V

OF A HIGHWAYMAN AND HIS VICTIMS

I WAS awakened by the stopping of the coach. The jar of the halt, and the excited stamping of the horses put an end to what little sleep there was about me and I prepared to get down and shake the stiffness from my legs. When I descended, I found not the hurry and bustle of the inn-yard, rushing stable boys, the glare of links, and a cheery light from the hospitably opened door, but the quiet of a forbidding dingle, already dark, from which the road squirmed out across the heath, like a snake from its hole, reddened by the setting sun.

In astonishment I turned my face the other way, toward the front end of the coach and there beheld the cause of our stoppage. Just visible in the gloom, and crosswise of the leaders' heads, was a silent horseman, so placed across the road that it was impossible to pass him.

"Ha!" thinks I, "here is no place for me."

So I nipped into the ditch and sat me down in the brush, where I could see all that took place and yet not discover myself. To my disgust I had left my sword in the rumble-tumble, having unhung it when I essayed to sleep, but I still had a pistol which I had taken from the house about me in case of need.

There was a long moment of silence, during which the horses shied and stamped and the harness clanked, and the coachman cried—

"Wo-ho! Dang 'e, wo-ho!"

The silent horseman sat unmoved, nor did he say aught even after the coach horses were quiet. Mayhap he waited to bolster up his courage a bit.

"Weel?" cried the coachman at last.

"Well," replied the horseman. "You know what I am after well enough, and what I shall have, too."

"Aye," replied the coachman. "I know. A rope aboot thy dirty neck."

This spurred the horseman both to action and speech, for he began to curse and swear, but it was easy to see that he was not accustomed to the art, for his words tripped on themselves and he repeated them overmuch.

"Light down! Light down!" he cried, waving a great dragoon's pistol at those on the coach roof and then he tried to make his horse come up to the coach.

The coachman pounded lustily with his feet upon the boot.

"Cam oot, cam oot," he bawled. "'Ere's summun to speak to 'e."

There was a deal of sleepy stirring from the interior, then a head popped from a window directly into the face of the horseman's nervous steed.

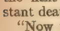
"Robbers!" cried the head, with a lung-top voice, the horse shied violently and the rider's pistol was discharged in air with a tremendous bang.

"At him!" roared a voice from the interior of the coach. "At him, while his pistol is empty!"

At the same time the coach door flew open and a man leaped out and flung himself at the horseman. Too late. The horseman had gotten his steed in hand again and shouting blasphemy at the height of his lungs, he smote down with his pistol barrel on his attacker's head and struck him to earth. Then he plucked another pistol from his saddle pocket, dismounted, thrust his arm through the reins and threatened the next that waggled eyebrow with instant death.

"Now then!" he cried, "deliver purse or life. I care not which!" And then he had another peg of lewd oaths to steady his nerves.

Here was no knight of the road, no Dick Turpin or Jack Sheppard, but some poor wretch seeking to retrieve his losses in trade or at the gaming table, by robbing travelers, and a very sorry job he was making of it.



THERE were lined against the coach body two poor countrymen, who had ridden on the roof, a man who looked to be a merchant and who was the man who had shrieked through the window. This last and the man who had been felled by the highwayman had ridden inside.

A slim enough bag, indeed, but these were parlous times in England. The roads were poor, coaches were slow, and the roads infested with thieves and robbers. Moreover, I had begun to hear that the Highlands were up again on behalf of the young Stuart, and there was talk on every hand of an invasion by the French who, since the battle of Dettingen, had borne us no good will. Consequently few stirred from their homes except in dire necessity and then they went with their lives in their hands and their hearts at their teeth.

The two countrymen, being on the end of the line, had first attention.

"Horn snuff boxes!" cried the highwayman, "and a few farthings. Come, —— boots, you have more than this about you, —— your eyes. Crush me for a worm, but I'll have your —— heart out of you! What was to pay the night's shot? Out with it!"

The poor farmer produced at this outburst the little store that he had brought to defray the expenses of the journey, hardly more than a crown or two, and the highwayman pouched it with more empty swearing. The second man had none, being a dependent of the other countryman. The third man was the merchant and I could hear his panting breath as the horseman stood before him.

"Take heed what you do," cried the merchant, "for I would have you know that I am a magistrate and can give you in ward. Ho there," he panted. "I call upon all loyal subjects of King George, God bless him, to gather and give aid, that this malefactor may be apprehended."

Here the merchant stopped for want of breath and the robber, who had been ranting and raging all this time, was silent for the same reason. None of the loyal subjects within hearing seemed inclined to give aid and the robber proceeded to jerk the merchant's watch from his fob, the pin from his ruffle, and the wig from his head.

"Where is thy gold, old hides and wool?" he demanded, nudging the merchant in the ribs with his pistol.

"Indeed I am a poor man," gasped the merchant. "I have no money upon me. I was to meet an express at the next inn—you have all that I own. Ho! all loyal subjects——"

Here the highwayman thrust forth his foot and very dexterously swept his victim's feet from under him and so laid him upon the flat of his back.

"A hand here," said the robber, motioning to the two bumpkins. "Have off the worthy magistrate's boots. I doubt me not that they are full of gold, blast them and condemn them and —— his lights and liver."

The two, nothing loath, probably, to assist in plucking a rich man and to see one of their betters brought low, stepped forward and dragged off the merchants's boots, the while he cried aloud in a most awful manner, like a pig being stuck.

"Aha," cried the robber. "I thought so. Why, that trick is as old as Adam!" And I heard the soft chink of gold. "Now then," he continued, "be off. Pack! Move! Remember Lot's wife and look not back, blast your limbs."

The countrymen scrambled hastily upon the roof and the merchant as rapidly got himself up the steps and into the coach, where his boots were cast about his ears by the robber.

"Be off, coachie," cried the horseman. "D'y hear? Be off!"

"Aye," cried the coachman. "I hear 'e. Let's know when youm goa to be hanged and we'll ahl coom an' gie 'e a hond."

Then he shouted to his horses and the coach creaked off into the gathering night.

A fine job indeed; one that a child with a wooden gun could have done better. No attention to what the interior of the coach or the fore or hind boot contained. Just a hurried search of the three passengers, amid a stream of curses, and the thing was over.

The man that had been felled by the robber at the beginning of the affair still lay unnoticed in the road and apparently the robber had forgotten him. This was certainly a piece of folly, for he was probably the fattest bird of the lot.

Several times I was on the point of rising from where I crouched in the ditch and putting an end to all, but the robber still had a pistol and was without doubt very nervous upon the trigger thereof, so I deemed it best to bide my time. The man was beside himself with fear and a frightened man is not one to trifle with.

When the coach had disappeared, but could still be heard groaning and creaking down the road, the highwayman drew what appeared to be a small sack from his pocket and began putting away his booty. There was a clash as the watch and seals went in and then the *chink, chink, chink* of dropping gold and the man's whispering as he told the pieces.

Still holding the bag, he drew up on his reins and brought his horse near, so that he might mount again. He thrust his pistol into the saddle pocket, seized a lock of the mane and was about to mount, when I arose silently from my place and stepping into the road, dragged the muzzle of my pistol up and down his ribs.

"How now!" said I in his ear. "How now?"

He fell very sickly against his horse and I thought the man would swoon, but he recovered himself and asked me chatteringly what I wanted.

"A watch," said I, "to know the hour by and a piece or two of gold to drink the King's health."

At that he had heart again, for he thought I had but newly come upon the scene.

"I am a poor man," he replied, "but here is all I have about me," and he drew out a horn snuff box — one of the farmers' no doubt—and two crown pieces.

When I bellowed with laughter in his face, he fell back against the horse again.

"Ass!" I roared. "I saw all. Give over now, or better still, I will take it."

Then I reached into his pocket and drew out the bag. Here the jelly-backed robber began to clamor and whine and tell me that he was but a poor shopkeeper, ruined by the new taxes, and that he had a wife and children to keep.

"Curse a bit," I advised, "'twill cheer you mightily."

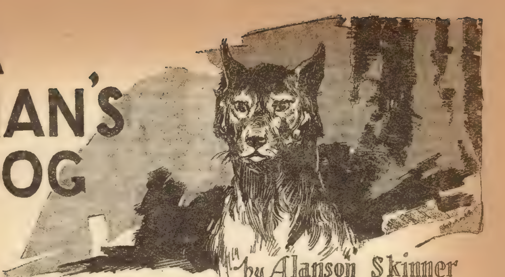
I prodded him a few more times with the pistol barrel while I thought what I should do and finally I ordered him to mount.

"Up," said I, helping him into the saddle with the toe of my boot, "and in future think not to mend your fortune by taking to the road. A man that knows no words but —— and —— and ——, and must needs repeat them over and over like a child saying his rote, has no place on the heath after nightfall with robbery in his heart. Air is a poor thing to dance upon."

I slapped his horse with my open palm and the beast leaped so that the rider was near unseated and then tore off up the road, where the sound of his hoofbeats was soon lost.

TO BE CONTINUED

A MAN'S DOG



by Alanson Skinner

Author of "The Honor of the Sioux," "The Quest of Red Elk," etc.

THE great Ponca camp on the Niobrara was in sore distress. Children wailed for food, and the stomachs of the warriors clung to their back bones for want of filling. Not a buffalo had been seen on the prairie within a radius of four days' travel on horseback for many months, and the seed corn, stored in the caches under the platforms that encircled the inner walls of the earth lodges for next year's planting, had nearly all been pounded up to make mush or soup to fill hungry little mouths.

Shunga-sabe, the Black Horse, sat on the roof of his earth lodge, smoking his long-stemmed pipe with the red stone bowl and watching the door of the teepee where the Soldier's Lodge, composed of the chief and his braves, was in council. It must be nearly time, he thought, for the council to end, and for their decision as to what was to be done announced to the people. Even as he gazed, an elderly man came out alone, mounted his horse and began to ride about the village, stopping here and there before the various lodges to make an announcement in a sing-song voice. Presently the old herald halted before the home of Black Horse.

"O Shunga-sabe," he cried, "the people are in great distress, they say! Famine is in the midst of us, they say! Four brave men, four men distinguished in battle, are to go out and search for the buffalo in the light of their experiencee, they say! You are to be one of them, they say!"

"*Hau!*" ejaculated Black Horse, hurriedly descending from his perch and making for the door of his lodge to lay away his pipe, while the messenger, his task completed, kicked his pony's sides with his moccasined heels, and returned to the Soldier's Lodge.

The way into the earth house occupied by Shunga-sabe led through a long covered passageway into a dimly lighted interior. Within, a few rays of the afternoon sun dispersed the gloom sufficiently to make clear the platform that ran round the interior wall of the building, cut off here and there by curtained bunks. Before the smoldering logs of a dying fire lay a litter of earthen pots, and among them, sleeping fitfully, was sprawled a huge wolf-like dog. As Black Horse brushed by to stow the pipe in his bedding in the rear of the lodge, the dog got up, shook himself, stretched, and ran forward to nuzzle his master; then, as the Indian turned to go out, he fell to heel and trotted after him out into the village and over to the Soldier's Lodge.

Once outside in the clear light,a strange thing could be noticed. To the grizzled tail of the animal was tied a single eagle feather, painted red, and standing upright. It told the world at large that its wearer was no ordinary animal, for its color and position meant two things—its owner had been wounded in battle and had counted first coup on an enemy.

Yes, Gray Hawk, the dog, was a personage of note in his community. His master's inseparable companion at home or on the war-path, he had stood over Black Horse's body on the field of battle, and though pierced through with a Dakota arrow, he had pulled down and killed a rash warrior who had ventured forward to scalp the wounded Ponca. Therefore he was welcome to enter even the Soldier's Lodge, and no cur in all the Ponca nation that did not slink away as he approached.

Before the Soldier's Lodge, Black Horse and his dog halted, and here they were presently joined by three other men of experience, while the people at large formed a great circle about them, wondering why these braves had been called. Presently the chief and his attendant came out, bearing a lighted pipe, which was handed to the four warriors in turn, and as they smoked, the chief addressed them.

"O warriors, you who have achieved renown both in battle and in council! Our people are in danger of starvation. Because of your reputation it has been decided to elect you as scouts for the buffalo hunt. Go forth, each to a different point of the compass, and return not until you bring us tidings that will make our hearts strong again!"

In one voice the four men cried assent and with a ceremonial offering of the pipe to the four directions, to the sky and the earth, our mother, they quickly left the Soldier's Lodge and returned to their own homes, tarrying only long enough to catch their ponies and picket them close to their houses that they might be ready to start before dawn on the following morning.

It was bitter cold, and the chilly sky was no more than pale the next day when Black Horse emerged from his lodge with Gray Hawk at his heels. As soon as he had crossed the threshold of his abode, Black Horse turned to the east and, facing where the sun would presently arise, he held up his hands in silent prayer. Then he released his horse, sprang on its back, and turned to the westward, the direction upon which the scouts had agreed the night before as his quarter in which to search.

Gray Hawk, whose stomach, like his master's, was empty, ran ahead, alert to every sound and smell. He sensed his own dignity and importance and did not leap and bark like some common dog. To his keen nose the morning breezes brought a bulletin of the occurences of the night before. Here a kit-fox had passed, and there a coyote. A jack rabbit, squatting behind a ball of tumbleweed, saw the dog and the horseman go by and was conceited enough to think that he had escaped detection because he had mastered the art of freezing so supremely well. As a matter of fact, Gray Hawk, the veteran, knew both by smell and sight exactly where the rabbit lay, but what was a jack rabbit to a warrior who had slain a Sioux? Had he been alone, no doubt Gray Hawk would have stalked and pounced on the rabbit, and made a morning meal, but he was accompanying his master on important business and meals could wait.

As they crossed a swell of the prairie Gray Hawk bristled from nose to tail tip. His nose told him that enemies had passed but a moment before. In the darkness that still clung to the ground he could not see the shadowy forms flit away, but the scent told him as plainly as sight that a pair of wolves had crossed the trail.

With the rising of the sun and the flooding of the open plains with light, the wild peoples sought their lairs and the scents became less distinct. Traveling ever westward man and dog passed over undulation after undulation of the prairie, now yellow from the fall frosts and dry and barren as any desert. When the sun was mid-sky high, they halted, and the pony browsed on the sere grasses while the man smoked. Gray Hawk, unfed and weary, lolled at his master's feet.

"Alas, my brother Gray Hawk," said Black Horse, "it makes my heart sad that I have no food to offer you. Had I ever so little, the half of it should be yours. It is a pity that you can not smoke. However, you, too, are of the nature of a warrior; you do not wear an eagle feather for nothing! Courage, my brother! If we can only find the buffalo, I shall have my woman cook ribs and back fat for you and serve them to you in your own wooden bowl, and they will proclaim your name as a successful scout with mine from the Soldier's teepee!"

Gray Hawk, lying there, raised his head and thumped his heavy tail until the eagle feather danced. He understood the word for buffalo and sensed that his master spoke of hunting them, and he knew that after a buffalo hunt there were many marrow bones. Moreover, his master spoke kindly, and in a tone that gave him courage. So he had faith and slept, content until Black Horse roused him; and they took up their journey once more.

AT NIGHT they rested in a hollow, both sharing the same robe. The Indian being exhausted, slept heavily, but both pony and dog were restless. Again and again the wind brought the odor of wolves to their nostrils —sometimes a lone dog-wolf passing along the ridge, sometimes a small pack. All going westward. Toward morning the wind shifted, and with it came not only the smell of wolves, but a heavy scent, the smell of dense bodies of animals, and a distant rolling noise like far-off thunder.

Gray Hawk was alert, and fully awake on the instant, barking and pulling at his master's hand.

"Hey, Brother! What is it? Have the enemy found us?" cried Black Horse throwing back his coverings and sitting up.

The pony was still cropping the dried grass stalks to the full length of his picket rope, and the half light of the dawn lit up the hills. Still Gray Hawk barked and pulled and Black Horse, aware that the dog had something to show him, sprang up and followed the animal who now, satisfied that his master was doing the right thing, trotted on ahead.

They topped the first rise and gazed out over a vast expanse of prairie that sloped away from them.

It was still too dark to see the objects at any great distance, but Black Hawk knew the sounds that floated to him. The bawling of calves, the bellowing of bulls, the howl of the white buffalo wolves. Somewhere in the thickness before him there were buffalo!

Slowly the round, red sun peeped over the horizon behind him, and with the coming of the dawn a dense black mass loomed up to the westward. As it grew lighter he saw plainly, and it seemed as if all the whole buffalo nation were gathered there! Old bulls with curved and battered horns, two-year-olds, with straight black spikes, fat cows, and reddish calves! A great herd, blackening the prairie as far as his eyes could see.

"*Hau*, brother Gray Hawk! You have again achieved honor!" cried Black Horse. "Now let us return and report to the chiefs."

In the Ponca village the scouts who had gone to the south, the east and the north, had returned dejected and without tidings.

The sun was already low on the second day when keen eyes discovered the western scout, Black Horse, returning, head erect, at full gallop, with Gray Hawk dashing in the lead.

In front of the Soldier's Lodge attendants gathered hastily a pile of dry buffalo chips, for by the manner of the scout's return, it was plain that buffalo had been sighted, and the scout who has tidings of buffalo takes oath as to the truth of what he is about to tell by kicking over a pile of buffalo chips and seizing a lance, thrust upright in the ground behind, with both hands.

Flinging himself from his horse, Black Horse sent the chips flying, and, with Gray Hawk at his heels, ran up to the spear and catching hold of it, stooped and whispered into the ear of the old herald who was in the act of lighting a pipe for him.

"Gray Hawk and I have seen many buffalo! It was morning and they were commencing to graze!"

"*Hau*, it is very good!" cried the elder, offering the pipe to Gray Hawk and then handing it to his master. Black Horse smoked a moment, making the usual ceremonial offering, and then, at a nod from the herald, man and dog followed the old warrior into the Soldier's Lodge while a great crowd of people closed in on the teepee, eager to hear the public announcement of the find made by the scouts. A moment later, when the news had been communicated to the chief and his councilors, the old man reappeared and addressed the multitude:

"O people! Gray Hawk and his master, Black Horse, have seen many buffalo! It is the order of the chief that we strike camp in the morning and start for the herd. All of you remember to be as silent as possible! Hunters must not go out ahead! If any one disobeys the orders of the chief while on the hunt, the soldiers will come out of their lodge at night and beat him, kill his horses and dogs, and tear his tent to ribbons!"

THE sun had not travelled far on his daily journey, next morning, before the Ponca were on their way. Of all the people only the aged, the sick or the very young with a small guard of warriors remained at the village of earth lodges.

Women bestrode ponies with all their

household goods and often the babies, too, dragged behind on netted platforms attached to poles. Families that were too poor to own horses harnessed dogs in the same manner. Naturally, their progress was slow, and a full day's journey found them still twenty miles away from the herd when they went into camp.

The next day the warriors gathered on horseback, fully equipped with bows and arrows. The chief divided them into two groups of equal numbers and, held in check by the Soldiers or Indian police, the two parties approached until close to the herd. Then they spread out and, at a given signal, each band charged down on the buffalo, striking on opposite sides of the herd at the same time.

As the men dashed in among the bison, they beat on their taut bow-strings with their arrows, and the drumming noise frightened the buffalo who spread out so that the trained horses might pass among them. Had the herd been smaller, the Ponca would have endeavored to make them mill about in a circle, but it was too great a body of animals to handle in this manner. It required a running hunt.

Pell-mell over the prairie dashed pursued and pursuers. Little the Indians recked for prairie dog or badger burrows. A man must risk his neck for food always, and now there was no time for caution. Soon the prairie was covered with huddled heaps, each marking a fallen bison. How long the chase might have lasted, no man may say, for suddenly the sun was obscured by dull clouds, and from the north came the first cutting blasts, filled with icy particles that herald a prairie blizzard. One by one the hunters gave over the chase, hastily cut out tongues and hump meat and raced back to their waiting camp.

But there was no retreat for Black Horse and Gray Hawk. The Indian's favorite pony had met with a mishap. In a badger hole his forefoot had sunk knee deep, throwing both horse and rider, and the Indian, rising, shaken but unhurt, found the pony's leg was broken and mercifully drew his hunting knife across the animal's throat.

With the coming of the unexpected storm, Black Horse, on foot and alone, was too far in advance to catch up with the retreating riders, and the thickening snow found him and his dog deserted on the prairie.

"Eh, brother Gray Hawk! Again do we find ourselves in trouble! But we be men, you and I," exclaimed Black Horse, "and not at all unused to the ways of the prairie! Yonder lies a great bull, a chief among buffalos! Let us go to him for protection."

With these words Black Horse approached the huge carcass, yet warm and unfrozen. With a few deft slashes of his knife he opened up the great belly of the animal, and pulled out the offal. Again with his knife he hastily hacked off great bunches of grass with which he lined the cavity and then, calling Gray Hawk to follow, he crawled into the dark interior of the animal and there the two, dog and master, curled up together, safe from freezing, to await the end of the storm.

By the end of the second day the snow had ceased falling, the winds had died down and the sun was out smiling once more. The Ponca camp was again moved to bring the lodges nearer the slain buffalo, in order that the women who had the task of butchering the great animals, might not have so far to carry their packs of meat.

Black Horse and Gray Hawk, the dog, were missing, and the chief himself with his attendant warriors were among the many who made up the searching party.

Half the day had passed without a sign of the missing ones when the advance guard of the warriors noticed a commotion in the snow ahead of them. Pressing forward, they saw a circle of half a hundred white wolves, moving warily about some object. At the approach of the Indians the wolves slunk off, some limping and, as they left the the scene, the approaching Ponca saw a sight which is still spoken of around the camp fires of an evening.

Gray Hawk, the dog, covered with blood from a score of wounds, still snarled defiance beside a huge buffalo carcass while, before him lay six dead and dying wolves, slain by his terrible jaws.

As the Ponca ran forward towards him through the knee deep snow, he barked a little, and managed to raise himself on his tottering, lacerated legs, and wave the eagle feather on his drooping tail. But, as they stretched out their hands to him, the end came, with a quiver and a sigh, the great dog collapsed, and his breath passed, whistling from his body.

Eager warriors hacked with their knives, and in a moment Black Horse, stiff, numb, and scarcely alive, was dragged from his refuge in the bison's belly. A fire was made and, rubbed by friendly hands until circulation had returned, he could speak. With a broken voice, choking from time to time, Black Horse addressed his rescuers.

"Warriors of my people, the Ponca nation! Gray Hawk and I were overtaken alone by the storm, and we cut open a buffalo and crawled into his belly to escape freezing as has often been done by hunters before. But I, fool that I was, forgot to take in my knife! The carcass froze so that I could not escape. Gray Hawk managed to gnaw his way out, and would have made the hole larger for me to crawl out by, but his ancient enemies, the enemies of his nation, the wolves, attacked him to get at the carcass. He gave his life for mine, he who had often risked it for me before! Yes, Gray Hawk even saved me from the Sioux in battle, and thus earned the right to wear an eagle feather and sit in the Soldier's Lodge! Now he is dead. It is in my heart that we bury him like a man with a warrior's honors!"

So it happened that a few days later a new scaffold was erected in the burial ground near the Ponca village on the Niobrara, and on it, wrapped in the finest blankets and buffalo robes, with a buffalo hide shield bearing two eagle feathers, was laid the body of Gray Hawk, the warrior dog, whose passing left so great a hole in the heart of his master that all other sorrows passed through unheeded.

ADVENTURE

by Harold Willard Gleason

HIS desk is by a window; just a streaky patch of sky
That frames the smoke of ferry-boats and squat tugs drudging by.
But now and then his dim eyes glimpse a gray gull poised on high.

Forgotten then the ledgers dull, the cobwebbed desk, the strain
Of deathly daily drudgery; and through his eager brain
Sweep images of whitecapped blue; free breezes' wild refrain;

The magic of a deck a-slant; the sting of salty spray;
The witchery of moonlight's gleam across a palm-fringed bay;
The tinkle of a temple bell in languorous Mandalay;

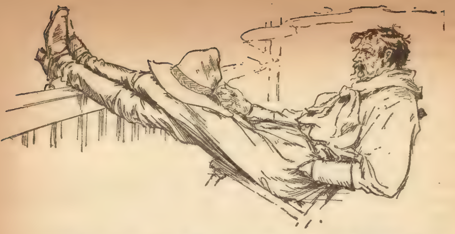
The flash of knives in narrow streets; the buzz of thronged bazaars;
The rhythmic swing of chanteys roared by bronzed and carefree tars;
And then—the creaking office-door restores his dungeon bars.

All day he chips malignant rust from anchor-fluke and chain,
Obeys the will of hazing mates, nerves dulled with drink and pain.
And ever-luring visions pass across his aching brain:
A cottage with a rose-framed door; a buxom, red-cheeked wife;
A patch of ground to putter with; a sheltered job "for life,"
A haven from dread sun, chill rain, from Tryant Ocean's strife;

A corner in a quiet inn; cool drink; old friends, to stare
Wide-eyed at tales of brawl or storm; clean sheets; grain-scented air;
The glamour of a city's streets; the market-place; the fair;

The lowing herds at evensong; the twittering lark at dawn—
And then a coarse voice hurls him back, and bids him labor on . . .

And thus Adventure calls to man—Fate's puppet and Life's pawn.



A FIFTEEN-CENT MEAL

by Raymond S. Spears

Author of "Fines and Fees," "Willie Alias Bill," etc.

"EH, THERE!"

A voice checked the gait of several men shuffling forth in the early morning.

"No. 11-408, drop out!"

"Yes, sir!" a chunky, bow-legged, flat-faced man nodded, answering as he slipped from the rambling group.

"You're going back today, y'know!"

"Yes, sir!"

The numbered man stood with his back to a cluster of weatherbeaten tents along a new roadway, looking across at a precipice opposite against the face of which was a miles-long descending line like a scratch. The mark was a cutbank highway which led into the enormous notch, the cañon entrance miles distant and some four thousand feet below, beyond which was a wide, placid breadth of sunny, green sageland of wide, rolling knolls.

The side-mountain tents were on either hand of a comparatively shallow gulch exit, up which grew quaking aspens amid broken stone. A galvanized two-inch pipe on X-top plank frames brought a jet of limpid water gurgling and thrusting into a concrete tank. A wheel catching the stream threw a pleasant fountain which rainbowed the air with its mist, a pulley and grindstone indicating the service of the surprizing power which it had amused and engrossed some handy man to construct.

Apparently ignored for the time, the man stood twisting his old hat in his stubby, fretted hands, his gaze following the course of the dugway from the far-away cañon foot, curving around points and turning back into the ravines, always climbing against the enormous slope until around the head of the cañon it crept up past the camp where he stood, his steel blue eyes squinting. Five hundred feet higher up, it swung to the right into Top Pass.

The boys were going out this morning to clean things, put some finishing touches here and there and make it look pretty. A few had been working there ever since spring. No. 11-408 had started work on that road away back around the cape down in the valley years before, when the penitentiary warden sent a few men out to patch the old double rut climb. He had laid his pick or shovel into every foot of that miles on miles of terrific stone. That was his road because one day, some ten years before, he had fifteen cents.

Exactly that. In those days he was Libra Cruvan, and quite a man in his way. He could ride anything from a bicycle to a wild, blue roan. It just happened that he walked into Cloudburst Valley, carrying his saddle and other equipment. He was footsore, for his horse had died under him, suffering from thirst, hunger and over-exercise. Cruvan's eyes were bloodshot, his gait stumbling, his hat drawn down over one of the hardest faces west of the Missouri, which is giving a man a considerable of an eminence at that.

He could see some horses down ahead of him. If they were right wild, his case was apparently hopeless. However, he wouldn't admit that. He stooped, dodged, crept and hunted among the juniper cedars, among the frost-shattered and water-rounded stones, and found a blessed trickle of sweet water to prove he had crossed some three desert ranges and three salt *playas* since this last time he started.

He drank, dozed, drank again, slept and awakened at last, astonishingly recuperated, considering how long he had scuffled along on his nerve. The sun of some day or other was setting. He sat up, looked around and then held out his rope, a good one for a fact, soft yet little worn.

He went down into the mouth of the gulch where he found the alluvial fan well grown to aspens, and below them, junipers. He worked rapidly along with astonishing quiet considering the boots he wore and the shape of his legs, their stubbiness and size. He was fairly creeping at the side of the oozing water in its course, passing the limpid pools, his eyes squinting, his brows drawn bushily over the hungry sunken pits. He froze suddenly, for on his left he heard a stone, a small cobble, rattling and bumping on a slope.

On the instant there was a wild rush of a dozen horses through the scattering cedars. He had been working into the breeze, and the animals had caught his scent. They were baffled by the eddying of the zephyrs, however, and came dashing by him in the part-gloom of first star-light. Cruvan bounded, rope in hand, to a flat-topped rock.

In a moment a ghost of a horse cut past him at top speed, but scratching gravel, running low like a clawing cat. With a twitch of his wrists he drove his noose with one hand and tossed the coil of his rope with the other, setting himself, a hundred and eighty pounds, against eleven hundred weight.

The rope came taught like a banjo string, humming, and the short legs of the man plowed two furrows on the gravel slope. The snared horse plunged and pitched, turned and dashed like a furious black bass in green waters. Sport of game fish landing? Cruvan had more activity in seven minutes than a trout catcher would endure in seven years!

When he was through, he had a California sorrel hog-tied and gasping for breath, while he went back to find and shake the sand out of his hat. He went up after his saddle, blanket and bridle, bringing them down the valley, drinking at about every pool, and finding juniper nuts in the pale night, eating them with some impatience, sometimes shucks and all.

By morning he had quite a full stomach, a saddle horse and quite a job before him. True, he considered himself lucky, picking up a maverick like that. Having prepared to his notion, he released his captive, rose with it and was glad the animal chose to travel as well as to buck. He made more miles in the general direction he wanted to go during the next three or four hours than he had during the previous week.

So he arrived in Curtain, a disturbance on the sweep of the alkali, beside the railroad. Curtain consisted of some seventeen newly painted houses, a yellow, red-trimmed station and the other features of a contract-built, company-owned, picked-employe town.

Libra Cruvan rode along the street. He could see the mountains out on the horizon, forty miles distant, and no house along the railroad or the transcontinental highway beside it. He wouldn't have come to Curtain in the first place if he had known exactly where he was. Not that he was lost; he was merely sixty miles farther west than he had figured, not having seen any reliable landmark to judge by.

Hungry, thirsty, dusty, dead tired, he saw a pretty building with large glass windows. On a sign was the word "Café," so he headed toward it. The place had six tables, five occupied, for the hour was noon. He took his seat among strangers. He was participating in the function of a number of white-collared people, and probably three fair ladies who kept the books and conducted the mechanical details of correspondence for the mine now being worked on an Eastern capital basis.

Cruvan, dashed, put his hands into his pocket and found, all told, two nickles and five pennies. A terrible, erect young lady in black dress as if she was mourning something, and white collar and cuffs for ornament, came to glare at him.

"Lady," Cruvan sighed, spreading the

coins from his palm and finger tips on that polished surface. "Lady, bring the best, the most grub yo' got for these here seven coins of the realms."

"Our cheapest dish," she snipped, "is twenty cents. Sixty cents for regular dinner."

Cruvan was blue-lipped, pale-cheeked, and kindly eyes would have noticed he was emaciated, that his flanks were caved in, despite the significant odor of cedar which the tiny seeds of juniper had given him.

"Nothing for fifteen cents?" he inquired, looking at the coins.

He glanced up and around, embarrassed, his chin quivering. He saw on all sides the quiet smiles of culture and importance. The fat girl behind the cash register crinkled her cheeks, her eyes bright blue and complacent.

Cruvan's joints creaked as he lifted himself out of the chair, turning to the door. Had one rancher, one fellow rider, a gambler or a desert rat been among the spectators, the man would have been yelled at as an old friend or at least the friend of somebody known to this more fortunate person. As it was they allowed Cruvan to take his departure. He rode the buckskin down the street to the Tunnel Road corner where the trucks went up to the mine, ran into the bank and robbed it on the indignant impulse of the moment.

HE JUST walked in and found a smirking fellow waiting for the next higher up to come and spell him for dinner, or rather for the business men's lunch. Instead of a meal release he looked into the awful muzzle of a famous model of revolver. The young man did as ordered, filling a stout pair of money bags with wads of certificates and some coins. Then Curvan tied the young gentleman up swiftly, gagged him, went out to the street and, as he could ride anything, selected a nice bright red roadster to roll away at fifty miles an hour.

Nobody stopped him. He was even sorry he hadn't gone back after that regular dinner. In the whole town of Curtain, he figured, there wasn't a decent man or charitable woman. He enjoyed thinking what this town of white collars would do with his California buckskin, now that they had him? If he could have had his say, he would have hung around a while, waiting to see how they would handle the animal, or rather the animal handle them. As a matter of fact, they scared it, and two days later a cowboy on the Pipebrand ranch caught the horse, still properly saddled where it had come to drink at the waterhole, forty miles from Curtain.

Cruvan found some nice clothes in suitcases in the car. He found quite a fine lot of canned goods, a self-cooling hamper and other interesting things. An hour later, forty miles distant, he ate at his leisure and wished he'd thought to bring his saddle with him. Anyhow, he had lots of money but nowhere to spend it.

He left the railroad at the first left-hand turn. He left the car with an empty tank a hundred and eighty miles distant that night. He dined at his leisure in Ely, having changed his clothes from boots to hat, and then pulled on a one-piece mechanic's suit, so no one would see what he had on under it.

The Ely paper said that a desperado with terrible features and awful demeanor had terrorized Curtain, held it up, devastated the nervous system of the men of the town, and rode away in Mr. Debeau's automobile. Cruvan grinned. He wasn't much for looks, his face was hard, but only hunger had made him desperate, hunger and fifteen cents.

He picked out and bought a pair of pants, then a nice shirt with the collar hitched to it, and, in the quiet of the American Hotel, changed into reasonable clothes. He shifted into his pockets and two horsehide money belts, the cash he had acquired. He took a train from those parts, and in Los Angeles settled down to the opportunities there to be had.

Oh, he was bad, all right. He had done considerable mischief in a careless sort of way. At the same time, what made him mad was having fifteen cents and being unable to buy anything to eat with it. In the hectic days, eating on Central Main Street, gambling upstairs here and there, running down to Tia Juana and circling around, Cruvan was still sore to think he had been obliged to rob a bank when he hadn't intended to do such a thing. Really, he hadn't been in a bank-robbing mood, but merely hungry.

One day, when he put his hands into his pockets and drew forth only some two and four bit pieces, and two or three crinkly silver certificates he knew his months of ease had reached an end. He had been pretty lucky, playing cards. Otherwise, long since he must have come to empty pockets. He walked doubtfully along the street. He eyed a number of banks and their branches with speculative interest.

"Hello, Libra!" a voice remarked in his ear, while he felt a familiar grasp on his shoulder, and found his gun taking its departure from under his coat, over his right hip. "Been lookin' for you!"

The buckskin had been noticed and remembered. Nobody knew that particular horse, of course. But the saddle on it meant something. Lots of people knew that saddle, cowmen, riders, liverymen and so on. The descriptions given of Cruvan by the citizens of Curtain were of no use at all. They might just as well have said he was nine feet tall, as what they did say about him. But the saddle betrayed the fact that Libra Cruvan had had it made to order over in Denver in a flush and extravagant pride, some time previous. That was foolish, of course; but every human has a foolish streak in him. The saddler put his mark on the leather and even on the tree and stirrups. That mark was famous, naturally. After the capture of the saddled horse it was only a question of time when they would pick up Libra Cruvan, asking explanations.

So they took Cruvan back, and confronted him with the bank teller, the fat girl from behind the café cash register, the thin, spindly waitress, two of the mine company stenographers and lots of others. Then they put on the stand a cowboy who had picked up the horse with the saddle, and they mentioned the roadster which was found outside of Ely, with proof that Curvan had come there, abandoning some short pants and long nightshirts which had belonged in the automobile. The proof was a bit absent here and there, but Libra Cruvan's attorney let this go, for he had hopes of being the mine company's attorney and the bank's legal adviser. At that, substantial justice was done, according to the law.

Now in the mountain cañon Libra Cruvan had expiated his hunger and his thirst, his recklessness and his fifteen cents, his seven months jubilee in Los Angeles and Tia Juana. He stood looking at the road his work had built, more than any other man's. The cut-bank was his contribution to automobile tourists. They would ascend it, stop at the summit and stare at the sign, exclaiming to think that they had actually climbed more than two and a half miles above the level of the sea. Some of them would appreciate the fifteen cent origin of this contribution to their safety.

The road opened, too, a beautiful back country to the coming of trucks and settlers, families and ranchers, all kinds of occupiers of the land. Libra Cruvan had plugged steadily. He had hooked out some thousands of tons of sparkling granite, porphyry, sandstone and loose stuff. If that road belonged to any man under heaven, it did to him.

Now and again he had glanced up to where the peaks were silhouetted against the sky. Sometimes he had glanced over his left into the depths, down the slope of which the angular chunks of broken stone sometimes bumped and clattered, smoking where they scraped or struck, exploding where they hit fairly.

He had seen the brilliance of morning whiten into the glare of crystaline midday and, toward the late afternoon, had felt the sting of foreboding wind, while heretofore invisible clouds appeared as pale, rose crystal, deepening to pigeon-blood ruby, speckled with stars of many gem hues, blue, yellow, red, green and the like. He had fed by the thousand meals in the mess tents. He knew the names of each spring where they had pitched the tents of the convict crews, Bide-a-Wee, Don't Hurry, Hang Fast, Pink Posies, Cling Fast and so on up to the We're Here. The water bursting down into the tanks tinkled loudly like bird notes.

Now and again one of the boys couldn't stand the music, and would go daffy. But Deaf Hank would cup his hands over his ears and sit awhile each evening, close up and listening to the sweet sound. That was funny, too, for Deaf was the "blow 'em boy," handling the explosives with a reckless efficiency that seemed to show he hoped an accident would happen, seeing that he was a lifer.

All this experience and show for fifteen cents! No matter what else No. 11-408 thought about, noticed, did or lived through, he would never forget the two nickels and five copper cents. How come he had saved the pennies he couldn't recall. The nickels were bad enough. Probably as his money got slack, his grip tightened. The memory of the fat girl behind the café cash regi ter was dimmed to a lumpy mess, with a pink and white puff on the top; he would probably recognize the bank cashier, if he happened to see him. The waitress in her gaunt thinness remained a black widow with white collar and cuffs and a crinkly, yellowish, rawhidy neck ascending into an indistinct face.

But even with his eyes open, he could remember exactly how those coins looked sliding down from his finger tips, three pennies with their faces up, the nickels showing their buffaloes, and the reflections of the edges shining on the polished table surface. Fifteen cents, ——!

HE NEVER did know just how much he carried away from the concrete and plate glass bank, with its new paint smell and shiny brass cage, marble counter and floor. He just hadn't counted the loot, come to think about it. He had enjoyed the money while it lasted. They couldn't take away the good time he had had with it. He lived right well on it. The sons of guns never did get a cent back. That was some satisfaction, considering the fifteen cents scoundrels who'd have a town where they'd let a man go away hungry because he had fifteen cents. Huh!

Nothing to eat for fifteen cents! No. 11-408 was now going down to check out. Good time, among other things, had favored him. Obediently, he clambered into the big supply truck, and went with it up to the summit, where the captain had a word to leave with the road gang. Then they started back down the cut-bank road. The prisoner thrilled as he rolled down over his work, that miles on miles of seven per cent. grade, as specified, surveyed and now an accomplished dugway. He saw, thrilling to every inch of the whole distance.

"All for fifteen cents," the convict said to himself. "All for fifteen cents. I was hungry. All I wanted was a snack to eat. There wa'n't no place to pay fifteen cents for grub. Huh! 'Twant right."

He knew, though, while he was digging the rocks out, leveling off the dugway, picking, shoveling, rolling and scraping, his work was making it right. He was there to straighten it all out, that matter of fifteen cents. The idea had been growing on him for years, at first a resentful helplessness as they told him the first time to take a pick and go to it; and then more and more wonderingly and puzzling till now he knew he hadn't quite finished the job. Oh, the dugway was done! The big part of it, his own task was finished, and the others were smoothing it up, prettying it. And yet there was that plaguey fifteen cents, with the cheapest thing to eat at twenty cents!

He was thinking so much about this matter that when they checked him out, took away his No. 11-408 and restored his Libra Cruvan name, he hardly noticed the process at all. He went along the concreted way, saw the gates of heavy bars opening before him. Just so they had opened to let him in. The trusty who threw the lever to clang them shut, separating him from the open roads and the freedom of spirit, now let them swing softly to behind him. Far behind him echoed for the last time the reverberations of that first banging and slamming of ringing metal which celebrated his conversion from Libra Cruvan into No. 11-408. He whispered his name, Libra Cruvan, a personal possession again.

He was alone. He was responsible for himself. No honor code, no state criminal statutes, no sheriff or detective agency or anybody was his boss now, except himself. He had nothing else to think about but the fifteen cents, fifteen cents, two nickels and five pennies which now was his sole incentive. It had become an ambition, a hope and a necessity with him. Around it, he had built up an odd edifice, an imaginary castle so strange that had he mentioned it, any listener must have laughed aloud.

What he needed was the center of the universe. Casting back through his memories, which ranged from Milk River, Montana, to Alma, New Mexico, and from Los Angeles to St. Louis, he reckoned the heart of the world was Red Desert. He headed for that town on the backbone of the United States.

A beautiful place to a free man's eye. Some scores of business places, houses, cabins, shacks and bungalows rested in a saucer-like basin with ridges and ranges fretworking the horizon on every side. Corrals for beef and sheep, horses and automobile tourists were there. Highways came meandering down out of the mountains to this common center. A railroad led straight through, out of the due east into the due west, its telegraph poles standing black, somehow, against the skyline as one approached from north or south, since it followed a kind of natural fill.

Libra Cruvan entered Red Desert. He had a bag with some duffle in it. He wore a hat which had been rolled up more than ten years. He was in clothes difficult to classify. He followed Sage Brush Street up from the railroad to the corner of Concrete Boulevard and cut across to the big bank on the corner.

As he entered, the man in the cage on the lopped off corner glanced at him, blinked and wet his lips nervously.

"Where's Packy?" Cruvan asked, ignoring the evidences of recognition.

"In there!" The teller jerked his head toward the president's office.

Cruvan found the door ajar and walked in. Three men were sitting in discussion. They all glanced at the intruder, and one sprang back, throwing up his hands, exclaiming—

"My God!"

"Why, howdy, Cruvan!" another cried, springing up. "Darn glad to see you. How's things?"

"All right," Cruvan replied, rolling his eyes at the excited man.

"Old friend of mine!" the bank president introduced. "Darbing of the Curtain State Bank."

"Yuh, I know!" Cruvan grunted, one corner of his lip lifting at sight of a man so afraid.

"That's right, you do!" Packy chuckled. "Well, old boy, what you going to do now? What can I do to help? Want a job on my ranch?"

"I want to open a café," Cruvan replied. "Right here in Red Desert."

"Yes? Good idea. We've a swell restaurant. No lunch room, though we need one. Around the corner behind the bank's a good tight building. You can have that——"

"Why, Mr. Delvane he's just out of—" Darbing interrupted.

"Look here," Packy turned on him angrily. "I've known Libra Cruvan twenty-five years. Rode range with him."

"But he held up our bank."

"What made you do it, Cruvan?" Packy turned to the grim visitor.

"Hungry."

"I thought so. Come on out, and I'll introduce you to Mr. Cresker."

Cresker was the man behind the wicker fence, who knew Cruvan well enough, but not in the way he now was made acquainted with him.

"Make out a book for one thousand dollars for him," Packy ordered, drawing a counter check on his own account to cover the loan to ex-No. 11-408, alias Libra Cruvan.

Cruvan for a while stood silent, blinking at the floor. He reached his hand then to shake the hand of his friend, turning and plunging out into the street immediately afterwards. He walked five miles into the open sage, returning after a time to ransack Red Desert for things he needed, hardware, drygoods, grocery and junk dealers.

FOR years he had listed and revised his estimates and ideas. He knew what he must have. He sought nothing else. He worked all that night. The following morning but one, a sign in black, red and white thrust out over the sidewalk on Sage Brush Street, just behind the bank.

Good Cafe Grub

Three small tables, a high lunch counter with chairs and stools to match, set off copper boilers, a fine range, shelves full of dishes and sundries as table ware and a large refrigerator.

A burly, white-aproned, hard-faced man gave a look around as he stood with his big, stubby-fingered hands on the counter. He sniffed the aroma of coffee ready and the stove hot. Then he went to the front door, unlocked it and unhooked the copper screen door beyond. He backed away as his eyes turned to one side, toward the floor. High hopes were in this enterprise. Libra Cruvan had not always realized his most modest anticipations. Now he wondered with sinking heart.

But the next instant a cowboy drifted around the corner, came in and ordered a cup of coffee with a piece of apple pie. A minute later another man, a taxi chauffeur, came in. Then two strangers sat at a table, and the face of Libra Cruvan began to glow and sweat.

A two-handed worker, able to pick and shovel right or left, he was a bit awkward. He had the knack, though. In his day he had cooked, waited and done many campfire and kitchen range kinds of professional things. Besides, his heart was in it. Steaks, beans, roasts, sandwiches, hamburgers and sausages were called for. He handled them all. He did not know, when Packy came sauntering in, that the banker had sent an edict up and down Concrete Boulevard that he expected his friends to do their duty by the new enterprise around the corner, until the business was established. Then having seen the cook well engaged, he himself sauntered in after the casual manner of a preoccupied man.

The bill of fare was simple. At the head was printed—

Beef Soup 15c

"I'll start with the soup," Packy ordered absently.

Cruvan dropped his hands on the counter, staring. It happened the banker was the first man to order this most conspicuous dish. For only a moment the café keeper lost the thread of his occupation, and then he reached under the counter and drew out a new sixteen inch tray. He pulled a loaf of dry Vienna bread out of a large basket. He put a two-quart bowl on the tray beside the loaf and turned to a sizzling kettle at the back of the range by the pipe. With a ladle he nearly filled the bowl with cut-up vegetables, two-inch cubes of meat and thick broth. He carried the tray around to the table, with a glass of water, soup spoon, knife and fork. And thus he served the visitor, with no sign of recognition.

The banker leaned back, the better to survey the size of this outlay. He glanced at the instantly retreating shoulders of the man he was backing, made as if to say something, but didn't. Instead he ate. A large, hungry, large-capacity man, Packy Delvan was just able to find the bottom of the bowl, though he left over some of the crusty bread.

He paid the fifteen cents, remarking:

"I believe I said I'd begin on the soup, Cruvan."

"Reckon that's so," Cruvan replied.

"Well, I ended on it, too."

Cruvan blinked, grinned and then jerked about to—well, tend to something.

In a way, this ended the matter. In another aspect, the new era of Libra Cruvan had begun. One day the soup was beef, another mutton, and again it was a Mulligan, an Irish, or a Fill Up stew or the like. Yet every day the head of Cruvan's Good Café Grub menu read to the music of that old refrain, a fifteen cent meal.

Even though down the list of entrées after a time, one found lamb chops, T-bones, porterhouse and tenderloins of sundry meat animals, and when the café was serving all the fancy relishes, fruits and sundries, its fame carried east and west by tourists, when the little old store was replaced by a regular full-size restaurant, with music and even Saturday night dances up and down the wide aisles, the first dish, if one called for it, would also be one's last, unless he specifically demanded a "plate" course.

One other thing about this particular bid for the patronage of a customer. Sometimes a dusty youth would come slinking in, even through the back door appealing to the help. Or a cowman would seek a secluded place, and places out of sight were always ready even in the big noon hour for the entertainment of these nervous, diffident patrons. If they had fifteen cents, that was all right. But if, as occasionally happened, some one came and asked a whispering, shamed question, "What have you for seven or 'leven cents," these inquirers found the menu price list deceiving. The fifteen-cent soup on bid of a nickel and two pennies came just the same, and the slim young woman behind the cash register would push back the two cents as change. She even did that one day for Packy himself, when he found he didn't have his pocketbook in the clothes he was wearing.

Notice, though, the cash register girl was slim. Cruvan could stand a lot, for he came of an enduring school, only he could never forget that lumpy, dumpling girl who had laughed at him at Curtain those years before. He tried not to have too thin waitresses, either. They never were dressed in mourning.

Also, only one dish on the list sold for fifteen cents. Cruvan had to print it there once. True, it hurt him. As a memory, nothing else was bitter like that figure. Not but what he was glad to have the wonderful privilege of giving a full to overflowing meal thus to whoever came; only he could never forget—was in a measure proud to remember—he had built a dug-way road for fifteen cents.

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THE TREASURE OF MULAI EL-HASSAN

A Complete Novelette by George E. Holt

Author of "The Hand of Allah," "Chuckling Gold," etc.

CHAPTER I

"WHAT ALLAH SHALL SEND——"

A FULL year had passed since Mohamed Ali had been forced to exchange the dignified existence of a Moroccan basha for the adventurous life of an outlaw with prices upon his head; since he had fled from the city of Tangier, of which he had been governor, to seek safety for himself and his family and his followers among the wild foothills of the Atlas. The turn of the same political wheel which had raised him to the bashaship had, in due course, torn him from it, even as it had made a fugitive of his venerable friend and sponsor, the Vizier Baghdadi.

It had been an active year for Mohamed Ali. Allah had been kind and had sent him many opportunities to annoy his enemies and to defeat their attempts to place his head above the Fez gate. He had tricked the new basha of Tangier, and tied his hands against any further real activity against him. He had brought ridicule upon the leaders of the Sultan's troops which had been sent against him; had played two enemies against each other, with the result that their heads both graced the city gates.

And having been captured through a foul trick by the basha of the insignificant village of Ain Dalia, had escaped his prison, locked the basha up in his stead and summoned the Sultan's officials with the result that the tricky basha abruptly ceased to breathe.

There had been various other breaks in the monotony of outlaw life, such as the rescue of the British Envoy's daughter and the securing of much arms and ammunition through the unwitting services of an enemy. So that Mohamed Ali should have found no reason for complaint. Yet now for more than a month he had lain idle in a little village in the foothills of the Atlas, with nothing to do but play with the children, listen to the troubles of the adults, and wonder dismally if anything would ever happen again. Almost always things began to happen when he felt this way.

Now he lay upon a native carpet beneath a great gnarled fig tree, and while Habiba, the little daughter of his host, Mustapha, played with his jeweled *kumiah*, frowned thoughtfully towards the west where lay that Tangier of which he had been basha. A year ago, and he had ridden forth from his house, clad in the flowing white *'ksa* of dignity, mounted upon a horse caparisoned in silk and velvet, with four great guards to clear the way for him with shouts of "*Balak! Balak!* Make way for the master!" Then the hurried flight by night, the battle between the Sultan's troops and the followers of himself and his friend, the Vizier, the rescue of the Vizier and his own retreat into the secure Riff.

"*Allah kerim!*" he exploded. "A year! That is time enough for a dozen revolutions of the Wheel. Yet the Sultan sits beneath the White Umbrella and offers another reward for my head whenever he thinks of it; the basha of Tangier is still Sid Omar ibn

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"The Treasure of Mulai El-Hassan," copyright, 1925, by George E. Holt.

Malek; the British government again presses both the Sultan and the basha towards my capture and the French and Germans plan how the country shall be divided before they have yet seized it."

He felt a tug at the silken shoulder-cord of the *kumiah*, and his moody eyes fell upon Habiba. A smile softened his bearded face.

"Ah, little one," he said, "what would you do if you were Mohamed Ali and were restless? Would you go forth and seek action, or would you sit quiet and repeat the verses of the Book, and wait for what Allah shall send?"

The little girl looked into his face with a smile. She was yet too young to understand his words, but, with the quick sympathy of childhood she touched his big brown hand and repeated solemnly—

"Allah shall send!"

"Oh-ho!" Mohamed Ali laughed. "Our little Habiba-child becomes a prophet." He seized her by her arms and raised her high in the air. "And, as Allah is great, I believe in such prophets. Another once said 'A little child shall lead them' and I have observed ere this that the wisdom of childhood is the greatest of all wisdom. Therefore——"

He set down the child, who ran away laughing.

"Therefore, O little prophetess, Mohamed Ali will have faith and will await what Allah shall send."

He stretched out, pulled the hood of his *sulham* over his face and shortly was sound asleep.

An hour later he was awakened. An elegantly clothed man of middle age, whose dark face wrinkled with fun, tickled the soles of the sleeping outlaw's feet until Mohamed Ali's great voice bade Habiba to cease lest he eat her up in one mouthful.

"Oh-ho! Valiant eater of children—and girl children at that!"

So jibed the newcomer, and Mohamed Ali sat up with a jerk, flinging the covering from his face and squinting at the light. Another movement brought him to his feet to grasp the hands of his laughing visitor in the triple hand-clasp of Islam.

"Kaid Dukali, by the name of the Prophet! Why, what are you about among these hills! Your place, offspring of idleness and luxury, is in the perfumed court at Fez, among the tinkling fountains and peaceful gardens and odorous intrigue."

"True enough," agreed Sid Dukali. "No doubt I would acquire more merit did I spend my days sleeping under fig trees. My *sulham*—" He fingered Mohamed Ali's garment—"is of less costly material than yours. And as for smelling intrigue, I think I now sit at the feet, poetically speaking of course, of the master of intrigue. At any rate, if there were more than one Mohamed Ali, my royal master, the Sultan, would assuredly abdicate in favor of his brother whom he does not like."

"And how knew you where to find me?" Kaid Dukali chuckled.

"Oh, when it became necessary to find you, the matter was somewhat simple after all. You have friends who are also my friends. But it is true that in order to be no deceiver of my master, I have been careful for a long time not to ask where Mohamed Ali was to be found. Or to permit one to tell me."

He selected, with care for his sheer spotless *sulham*, a seat upon the carpet, cross-legged. Mohamed Ali flung himself down beside him. It was good for good friends to come together thus, and his ears were open for the news of the outside world which he knew would soon be poured into them, and not dryly.

Kaid Dukali was known for wit, cleverness and sophistication. Perhaps no one was more intimate than he with the Moroccan Sultan, the Commander of the Faithful, one of the few absolute monarchs left upon the face of the earth. Wherefore wit and cleverness and sophistication were a mantle of protection which he wrapped about him. Few men knew what Kaid Dukali thought; none knew what he believed except, perhaps, this big, brown outlaw who now lay at his feet. One vital hour, years before, when their two lives were not worth a grain of sand, had made a bond between them which nothing yet had broken.

"I wonder—" began Mohamed Ali, but from a little distance came the voice of Habiba.

"Allah shall send," she called, and laughed at her own memory of the new phrase. Whereat Kaid Dukali asked a question and Mohamed Ali explained.

Kaid Dukali was silent for a space, and his face grew serious. Then:

"It is somewhat strange, Mohamed Ali,"

he said. "Because I think that her prophecy has come true, that Allah has sent."

"I listen," replied Mohamed Ali shortly, and a little tingle crept along the back of his neck.

Kaid Dukali reflected a moment before speaking again.

Then he smiled briefly, reminiscently, and said—

"You remember the affair of Kaids Aisa and Brahim?"

MOHAMED ALI grinned.

"Does one forget the occasions when one has touched hands with death?" he asked.

"Well, the matter in hand begins there. I was among those who stood near His Majesty when Brahim took from his sack the head of Mohamed Ali."

"I heard and saw His Majesty rock with un-royal mirth.

"'We have here a letter from Mohamed Ali,' said His Majesty. 'Mohamed Ali will never write another,' said Brahim. 'But, fool!' said the Sultan, 'how could Mohamed Ali write us a letter if his head is in that sack?'

"'Allah only knows that,' answered Brahim. At which—yes, laugh, Mohamed Ali! That is just as my master laughed also. But—and here comes a thing of importance—but when His Majesty had somewhat ceased laughing, '*Allah kerim!*' he cried, 'And if I could only catch Mohamed Ali I vow by Mulai Hassan, my father, I should make him a Vizier!'"

"The Sultan was merry," replied Mohamed Ali, "and the Vizier who is chosen because he makes the Sultan laugh, ceases to be Vizier when the Sultan stops laughing."

"True, so far as it goes. But the Sultan has said much the same thing to me privately since then."

"But," offered Mohamed Ali, "he has no doubt said it in this form—'If Mohamed Ali were not Mohamed Ali, he could be of assistance to me if I were to make him a Vizier.'"

Kaid Dukali grinned.

"You are something of a sage, Mohamed," he said. "There was indeed a time when he put it that way. But later, as I was able to drop a word here and a word there, he began to think that perhaps Mohamed Ali as Vizier would be preferable to Mohamed Ali as outlaw."

"But," again objected Mohamed Ali, "that he could not possibly accomplish England demands my punishment. Many others demand my punishment. The Sultan needs my punishment. It is a question of the Sultan's prestige. But come to the meat of the matter, let us have all the facts before us."

"Good!" agreed Kaid Dukali. "In short then, leaving out of the case the various steps leading to the present situation, His Majesty believes that you, even as an outlaw, can render him a service, a very great service.

"If you succeed he will make you a Vizier. He can then do so because your success will eliminate those reasons which you perceive now prevent him from doing so."

"And the nature of this service?"

"ANOTHER matter first. With France and Germany almost at war with each other for control of Morocco; with France and Germany and England, all intriguing and plotting and maneuvering for more Moroccan interests, and the agents of a dozen other nations sticking their fingers into the pie, what my master needs is a political intelligence service with Mohamed Ali at its head. And that, I think, is a compliment to Mohamed Ali. I think it is a very great compliment to Mohamed Ali."

"Hmph!" grunted the potential Vizier. And again, "Hmph!" But, after a little while:

"That is not a foolish thought," he observed. "Nor did it ever come from the head of Mulai Abd-el-Aziz."

"He thinks it did."

"Naturally. But it has too much merit."

"And yet—I have no especial love for His Majesty, nor he for me, I suspect."

"And for the *nasrene*, the foreigner? Has Mohamed Ali love for them?"

"No! By the name of Allah, no!" growled Mohamed.

"And, could he prevent it, Mohamed Ali would see his country become a colony of France or Germany?"

"As soon as I, myself, would become a Christian," answered the outlaw. "You argue well, Dukali, but what can I do?"

"This," returned Kaid Dukali swiftly. "This, and it may make you the saviour of

Morocco as well as of the throne of Mulai-Abd-el-Aziz. The Sultan needs money, much money. France on one hand, Germany on the other, with England encouraging whichever best suits her own selfish purposes, has put my master into a corner from which there is apparently no escape except by the making of a loan from either France or Germany. Such a loan would terminate Moroccan independence. If it were made from France, she would control our finances, and through our finances, all our affairs. We would become a French colony in a year or two. Germany would be no better. Our Lord and Master would become only a puppet in the hands of the country which made the loan, a beggar upon a throne, and we——"

He paused to light a cigaret.

"We would be French or German subjects," concluded Mohamed Ali for him. "And much I like the thought! But why make the loan? What is the need?"

"His Majesty obligated himself long ago to do certain things. If he fails to do them, France will interfere, will use his failure as an excuse to secure from Europe a mandate to manage our affairs for us. You and many others have looked with scowls upon my young master's extravagance for the past few years, failing to see that it was all a plot and a successful one on the part of Europe to bankrupt him, and thereby—" he leaned forward and laid a stressing hand upon Mohamed Ali's knee—"and thereby to prevent him from carrying out his agreements. Mulai Abd-el-Aziz is young and not very wise, and the political agents of France and Germany and England have deceived him and blinded him and taken advantage of his youth and power and passions, and it has not been well for us. But it was a plot. Now, having made it impossible for him to keep his agreements, they prepare to insist upon it or upon the control of Morocco. And that——"

"Means sunset, the final sunset in sunset land," offered Mohamed Ali. "*Allah kerim!* But what is then to be done except to fight? I myself will guarantee to take care of all the foreigners in the Gharb and as many more as may come."

"It is not to be done that way, friend of my heart," said Kaid Dukali. "It would be like the story of your ancient kinsman, Sid Hercules, who found that for every head of the dragon he cut off two new ones grew. No, we are too weak to fight, and Europe knows it, having weakened us. There is but one way out. The Sultan must keep his agreements. And that will take a million pounds sterling."

"A million! Hmph! And when did the Sultan ever have a million pounds in his treasury? Not in my day, at least!"

"True," agreed Kaid Dukali. "But it must be secured."

"I know a certain black magician in Tangier," said Mohamed Ali ironically, "who calls himself Master of the *Djinnoon.* Perhaps—perhaps his *djinnoon* could find a million sterling in the air!"

"No. It is Mohamed Ali who shall supply the money."

CHAPTER II

"TRUST NOT THE SEA, THE SULTAN, NOR THE FUTURE."

MOHAMED ALI blinked blankly in Kaid Dukali's face.

"I!" he exclaimed. "I, Mohamed Ali, secure a million pounds for the Sultan! You joke! If it were a thousand or maybe even ten thousand, I might find it. But a hundred times that! You amuse yourself with me!"

"You are wrong," corrected Kaid Dukali seriously. "As you shall see. Now here is a thing which is not talked about in the market-places nor along the highways. It is known to the Sultan and to me and to one other—and to no one else, until I tell it to Mohamed Ali, trusting him whether he serves us or no. The Sultan Mulai el-Hassan, father of our present Lord and Master, died suddenly at Rabat, as you know, upon his return from a long journey through the south to punish certain rebellious tribes, to collect tribute from them, and, further, to secure what was due him from certain great kaids who had not made an accounting to him for several years.

"Mulai Hassan's sudden death made the boy Abd-el-Aziz Sultan, and it also made Bou Hamed regent. But here is the meat of the matter. Not one *real* of the treasure that Mulai Hassan collected in Sus was ever seen again. Memoranda found after his death showed it to be nearer two millions of pounds than one million. It was in gold and jewels, and that gold and those jewels disappeared. But it was not stolen. Mulai Hassan placed it in a safe place and died."

"Hmph!" grunted Mohamed Ali. "An interesting tale. But it appears that in order to ascertain where Mulai Hassan hid the gold, one would needs die and go to Paradise to ask him."

"Almost but not quite. There is a certain note among the memoranda of Mulai Hassan which we think is a clue to the hiding place."

"Why, then, do you not go and seek?"

"It is not a matter to be published to the world. His Majesty can not go upon the search, that should be clear. And I, I am no warrior, and I fear death. And so I have come to Mohamed Ali."

Mohamed Ali smiled grimly.

"It is true," he agreed, "that I enjoy battle and that I am no more afraid of death than is Kaid Dukali. But I am interested now. Why does warfare and death lie between His Majesty and the treasure?"

"Because I have said that one other person knows this secret; yes, more, knows where the treasure is hidden, which we do not know. And that man is your old enemy, Abd-es-Selam."

"Abd-es-Selam!" echoed Mohamed Ali. And again, more gently—

"Abd-es-Selam."

And, after a moment:

"The matter becomes more plain. He was Vizier of the Treasury for Mulai Hassan, I remember. And opposed both the naming of the boy Abd-el-Aziz as Mulai Hassan's successor and the appointing by the *ulema* of Bou Hamed as Regent."

"Such was the case," agreed Kaid Dukali. "And, being shorn of power, therefore he kept the secret of the dead Sultan's treasure."

"And now he plots against the Sultan and his country," added Mohamed Ali, and his companion nodded.

"But," went on Mohamed, "why do you think that Abd-es-Selam has not secured the treasure long ago for his own use?"

"There are two reasons. One is, that we have watched Abd-es-Selam, and we know he is not rich. The other, the treasure must have been hidden in or near Rabat and no treasure has ever been taken from there. For the good reason that upon the death of Mulai Hassan, the people of that district who had been punished by him became unfriendly with the new Sultan and, as you know, have guarded their land jealously against visitors who might be spies. Only within a month have they again become friends. And still another reason is that we believe Abd-es-Selam is even now preparing to seek the treasure. We know his movements and they point to this. Wherefore it is time for us to act, also."

"Allah! Yes," growled Mohamed Ali. "I should have acted before this, had I been Sultan. I should have had Abd-es-Selam stretched out between four ropes in the palace courtyard with a slow fire burning beneath him. Then, I suspect, he would have told me what he knew."

"No doubt! No doubt, fire-eater!" agreed Kaid Dukali. "And the following day a French warship would have been in Tangier harbor demanding that such a cruel tyrant be deposed, and at once."

"But the matter could be done secretly," objected Mohamed Ali.

"There are few secrets in the court in these days. If my master blows his royal nose, the matter is reported in detail to the French and German and English foreign offices—even as to the number of blasts blown and the sort of handkerchief used. No! This thing must be accomplished in another way and that way Mohamed Ali will no doubt discover in due season."

"And, of course, Mohamed Ali must remain outlaw in name at least," offered Mohamed Ali. "That I can see."

"Of course. But for only the time it will require for you to perform this task. You will have more strength in that way. The Sultan will not be responsible—" he grinned cheerfully—"for your actions. Nor will you be impeded in any way. The means you use do not concern us. Nor will you have to account for them. One thing only is desired. That you find the hidden gold. Bring that to His Majesty and a new career opens to you. Such a career as, I think, will appeal strongly to Mohamed Ali. And power such as few men have had."

"As to the Viziership and the political intelligence work, yes," agreed the outlaw. "But the matter of this task requires thought."

"But I must return to Fez tonight. What word shall I carry to my royal master?"

"Tell His Majesty that Mohamed Ali will consider the matter."

"And your decision?"

"I will communicate it to the Sultan as

soon as I have decided. That will be quickly. Tomorrow, perhaps."

Kaid Dukali rose, and Mohamed Ali with him. The former tightened his belt and offered his hand in farewell.

At that moment there entered the head of Mohamed Ali an idea—hazy, vague, but the possible seed of a future action.

"It may be," he said, still holding Kaid Dukali's hand, "that I shall desire to send an emissary to—to you or even to the Sultan."

"He shall be accorded courteous treatment," Kaid Dukali assured him quickly.

"He could deal, as my representative, directly with His Majesty? That you could arrange?"

"Assuredly."

For a moment Mohamed Ali reflected, his eyes watching Habiba chasing an elusive but friendly dog.

"In that case it may be that I shall send one whom I think you know. A distant cousin of mine who is blind of one eye and a beggar to boot. Aisa, the One-Eyed, he is called."

"I recall him because of his resemblance to you—except for the inevitable bandage over the blind eye."

"That resemblance," said Mohamed Ali with a smile, "used to get him into difficulties before he became blind. And I think that he now affects the bandage in order that he may not be mistaken for his cousin. He has reason, I grant. So then, it is he whom I shall send. And furthermore, he will wear upon the first finger of his right hand the ring which I now wear, the one which was a gift from Kaid Dukali upon a certain occasion."

He twisted the hand that held the Kaid's so that a broad silver ring, deeply chased with the conventionalized wild roses which mark Marraksh workmanship, was revealed.

"It is well," agreed Dukali. "Thus may we be doubly certain that nothing goes wrong. Good-by then—*selaama*. And may Allah guide your decision."

"It is He who shall decide," made answer Mohamed Ali simply, and sped his guest upon the road.

As Kaid Dukali's horse stirred up a trail of yellow dust down the hillside, Mohamed Ali walked slowly toward his house. Habiba dashed from behind a giant cactus and grasped his hand, running beside him.

"Allah shall send," she repeated. "But, Mohamed Ali, what shall he send?"

"Aha!" laughed Mohamed Ali. "You have asked your father the meaning of the new words. What shall he send? Well, now—I think, perhaps, he shall send Mohamed Ali into strange places. Run back now, little one, and perhaps later we shall play again."

NOW, Mohamed Ali was far from being a fool. He trusted Kaid Dukali farther than he trusted any other man. But he trusted no man wholly. Who can know the heart of a man? What man is today the same as he was yesterday? What man will be the same tomorrow as today? Mohamed Ali knew that the Mohamed Ali of yesterday was not the Mohamed Ali of today, and that another day—every day—would see a new man in the other form of Mohamed Ali.

This being true, other men must be the same. And as it was beyond his ability to know what changes would take place overnight in the inner person of Mohamed Ali, was it not still more impossible to anticipate what changes would take place between sunrise and sunset in another person? Wherefore Mohamed Ali trusted almost wholly, but not quite. Only as wholly as he trusted himself, which sometimes was a great deal, and sometimes not at all. Which is wisdom.

Now, Kaid Dukali he trusted more than most men, but the matter needed consideration nevertheless. Even if Kaid Dukali were trustworthy, even not excepting that hair's breadth of doubt which wisdom keeps in mind, was there not the chance that he was being deceived? That Dukali knowingly would lead him into a trap was inconceivable. That Dukali might be the unsuspecting bait in a trap which others had built, there was a possibility.

"It has been wisely said," he reflected, " 'Trust not the sea, the Sultan nor the future!' We must have proper safeguards. Now in the past I have always found it the course of wisdom to risk my head in order to protect it. If one only waits long enough in the same place, in due course the executioner will arrive with his sword. It is much better to risk it knowingly than unknowingly. Wherefore I think that Mohamed Ali must most quickly ascertain the truth of present matters and so bind the future that there may be no undue tricks played with Mohamed Ali's head. And that unquestionably involves that I subject it to a very real risk without further delay."

CHAPTER III

"WHAT MY EYES SEE, MY HEAD BELIEVES."

THE quarters of Kaid Dukali were in the Sultan's own palace in Fez, as befitted one who was His Majesty's most intimate friend. But each domicile in the royal home—and there were many—was independent of all the others. More so, in fact, than in an American apartment house, for while there were common avenues of ingress and egress, each domicile had its own private and secret modes of entry and exit. And, as family life is much more private in the orient than in the occident, there did not exist the usual opportunities to observe what was taking place in the homes of one's neighbors. Which has both advantages and disadvantages, as has the more public manner of living to which a less sensitive people is accustomed.

Kaid Dukali was taking his ease in a crimson velvet house-gown, lying upon great silken cushions and inhaling the pungent Persian tobacco smoke from a silver-mounted *hookah*, when his serving man, Mustapha, announced to him that he who was known as Aisa, the One-Eyed, waited upon him.

There was that in Mustapha's voice which clearly advised his master to let Aisa, the One-Eyed, wait until he should become tired of waiting and should go away, and patent disapproval when Kaid Dukali ordered that Aisa be brought into his presence. He leaned forward and moved the two tall brass candlesticks, which stood on either side of him before the couch.

"But he did not also tell me to say that he is a beggar, and not an overly clean one at that, which he manifestly is. If my master desires to send him a few *reales*, I will carry them to him and send him upon his way."

"Keeping, of course, half of the alms for yourself."

The shot went home, and Mustapha shuffled uneasily.

"No. Bring him here as I have ordered. And let us not be interrupted. He is a Sanussiyah as you probably do not know, and I would discuss with him a question of a sum I wish to give to the Brotherhood."

Now as beggars are of an honorable profession throughout the orient, frequently being accredited representatives of great religious brotherhoods such as the Sanussiyah, there was nothing extraordinary in the fact that the Sultan's friend should receive one of them in his own house.

"Very well, sidi," said Mustapha, with the privilege of all old servants. "But nevertheless, even a Sanussiyah beggar need not smell like a *fandak*. But I shall bring him at once," and he withdrew, to return in a moment with the beggar.

There was no doubt that Aisa, the One-Eyed, smelled like a *fandak*, even as Mustapha had said. From his patched and ancient brown *djellaba* emanated the odor of the caravanserai—that medley of smells of horses and camels and mules, of kerosene and bad tobacco and burning dung. It hung about him, preceded him into the room, fought for a moment with the powerful Persian tobacco and overcame it quite. The nose of Kaid Dukali, attuned to the delicate perfumes of the court, wrinkled in derision, but his eyes were friendly as he bravely motioned the beggar to the cushion beside him.

"Your pardon, sidi," answered the beggar. "But if you permit, I will sit here at a little distance. I have been ill of a cold—" he touched his breast—"and for two days have lain in the *fandak* of Achmed el-Larbi, near the north gate. I fear my clothing—" an almost imperceptible smile brushed the corners of his mouth—"might contaminate the sweet perfumes of your own."

He squatted down upon the floor, perhaps four paces from the Kaid.

"Hmph!" grunted Mustapha, waiting out of curiosity near the door. "It would contaminate a corpse I think."

Kaid Dukali's curt voice sent him muttering away, to close the door irritably behind him, and to gibe with his fellow servants at the habits and customs of Sanussiyah beggars.

"And besides," continued Aisa when the door had closed, "it is quite true that I have a cold—" he coughed harshly, and went on in a hoarser voice—"and I have heard that colds are contagious."

"And I have heard," said Kaid Dukali, "that one called Aisa, the One-Eyed, once graduated from the *madrissah* at Fez, and therefore is qualified to speak with wisdom concerning colds and many other matters. Such, for example, as——"

He paused, and dragged at the amber mouthpiece of his *hookah*.

"Such as matters connected with our cousin, Mohamed Ali." The beggar completed his sentence. "Yes. Assuredly I did not come at this time of night to ask alms. Wherefore——"

He stretched out a dirty hand, upon the first finger of which gleamed the ring of Mohamed Ali.

"That was to be the guarantee, I was told."

"All is in order," agreed the Kaid. "You bring a message from Mohamed Ali?"

Aisa, the One-Eyed, adjusted slightly the filthy bandage which concealed one eye, scratched a little in the brown beard which covered his face.

"It was told to me that an arrangement would be made whereby I should speak directly to the Sultan."

Now it was Kaid Dukali's turn to scratch his head. To promise Mohamed Ali that his emissary should be respected and granted an audience with the Commander of the Faithful, was one thing. To find that emissary to be a ragged beggar, smelling unto heaven, left him in some embarrassment. It occurred to him that he might array the mendicant in some of his own clothes after giving him a bath or two, but immediately thereafter it occurred to him that with this particular beggar he could do nothing of the sort. He looked up from his short reverie to catch a mocking smile upon the face of the One-Eyed. Being a man of wit, he returned it without embarrassment.

"Your difficulty is understood," said Aisa. "But have you not forgotten that the Sidna—" he used the native term for His Majesty—"has proclaimed that all men of learning are welcome to audience with him? And, being a *f'kee* of the *madrissah* of Fez, can not I justly account myself a man of learning? That in case any one should see us and be inclined to wonder."

"Yes, that story will do for those who may be inquisitive as to the matter. As for the Sidna, well, he will know you for what you are."

"At least in part," agreed the One-Eyed. "And as for the rest, I am the representative of Mohamed Ali."

"That is what I meant."

"But to speak plainly with you," said Aisa, now more seriously, "Mohamed Ali has told me all that he knows about this matter, of course, and I do not like it. I have not Mohamed Ali's head nor heart, but I am afraid of this business. Not only must he risk his life a dozen times if he undertakes this task but, after it is done, he must then risk his head upon the Sultan's approval. He has but one head—and Sultans are Sultans, as you no doubt know."

"I know well," agreed Kaid Dukali. "But also I know well this particular Sidna. And who better? Believe me when I say to you that he is sincere in this; that he needs what only Mohamed Ali can accomplish. He will reward, as I have said. As for the risk that Mohamed Ali takes in the doing of this thing, Mohamed Ali said naught to you of the dangers he would run."

"True. True. Nevertheless, I have thought of them somewhat. But the greatest danger, as I see it, is that, once the work is done, His Majesty may be forgetful. And his loss of memory will mean the loss of Mohamed Ali's head."

"I will place my own as hostage," answered Kaid Dukali, and rose to walk swiftly up and down the room. "*Allah kerim!*" he exploded, striding up to the figure squatting upon the floor. "You talk as if I were trying to trick Mohamed Ali, while I love him more than a brother. Mohamed Ali has but to ask me for my life and it is his. Does he not know this? Does he think I trick him? That I lead him into a trap? That I—that I—Allah!"

"No," answered the beggar, "he does not think as you have said. That I know. But let us talk with the Sidna if the time is ripe."

"Yes, let us talk with the Sidna," answered Kaid Dukali, picking up a white *sulham* and donning it. "Let us see whether you, *f'kee* of the university, think that Mulai Abd-el-Aziz, boy as he is, needs aid, or is trying to trick your cousin and my friend. Come!"

He threw back a heavy curtain, revealing a small doorway, through which they passed into a long dim corridor. At the far end Kaid Dukali held up a detaining hand.

"These are the Sidna's apartments," he explained, "Wait here until I return."

THE One-Eyed squatted obediently upon the tessellated floor in the posture of the beggar the world over. He had not long to wait. The door was opened discreetly and Kaid Dukali beckoned him to enter. He followed his guide through another short corridor, shuffled past a heavy velvet curtain which Dukali held back for him, and realized that he was in a small room, unfurnished save for a splendid rug and a divan, realized rather than observed, because upon the divan sat a figure swathed in white, sat with legs folded beneath him like the Buddha, his hands folded in his lap. His roundish, pale face was shadowed by the sparse, short, black beard of adolescence, and his eyes were either deep-set or sunken, as of one who bears burdens of state or low vitality.

The beggar observed these things in the time it required for the four paces which took him to the divan, there to kneel swiftly and to kiss the effeminate white hand which His Majesty, Mulai-el-Aziz, Prince of Islam, Commander of the Faithful and Sultan of Morocco, extended in the supreme earthly blessing of Islam.

"A boy in truth," thought the beggar even as his lips felt the contact of the royal skin. "And in no wise qualified to be absolute monarch over such a people as we are. Now his father, Mulai el-Hassan——"

He rose at the Sultan's command and, again at the royal word, squatted upon the carpet before the divan. And Kaid Dukali, at a motion from his master, seated himself upon the carpet, but at the very edge of the divan. Thus he was placed between the Sultan and Mohamed Ali's emissary.

"What reply does our cousin send us?" asked the Sultan of Dukali instead of the beggar.

His acknowledgment of relationship was not a mere courtesy. Mohamed Ali came in as direct a line from the Prophet, was as pure-blooded a *shareef* as His Majesty himself, and consequently cousin to all other Descendants of the Prophet.

Dukali shook his head.

"His emissary has not told me, but requested that Mohamed Ali's decision be given directly to Your Majesty. But I fear that Mohamed Ali is not fully assured of our sincerity in this matter."

The heavy, white eyelids of Mulai Abd-el-Aziz fell wearily over the dark eyes.

"We can not find it in our heart to blame him," said the young prince. "In all the empire, yes, and in all Europe, there is nothing but doubt or distrust of us. And there is reason, there is reason."

His voice held the bitterness of disillusioned youth.

"But in the name of Allah the Merciful, from whom we plead for mercy, where can we find those we can trust? Disappointment after disappointment, betrayal upon betrayal, treason upon treason! With the result—" he drew a hand across his eyes as if to rub away a mist—"with the result that all expect trickery and deceit from one whom they have endlessly tricked and deceived. Surely Allah has not set our feet in a good road. As for our cousin, Mohamed Ali, he has aided our enemies by making trouble in our empire. Nevertheless, he is a man in a country where men have become few, and he is no traitor to his own land, of that we are well assured. Wherefore—wherefore we had it in mind that he might aid us."

He paused wearily gazing at the carpet.

"Your Majesty," began the beggar, without the permission he should have sought, "are there not still men of wit in Al Moghreb? Is the empire so poor in minds——"

"There are men of wit serving the interests of Europe. There are good minds filled with treason. There are able men plotting against us. But we stand alone except for our good and wise friend Dukali—" he laid a hand upon the Kaid's shoulder—"and needing a man of strength, of cleverness and daring, but above all, one who would not sell our empire and his country for a *tarboosh* full of silver—yes. And because, also, our friend Dukali has love for Mohamed Ali as well as a vast belief in his ability which—" he smiled wryly, as remembrance of some of Mohamed Ali's exploits passed through his mind—"which we also believe to be considerable. But now inform us of our cousin's decision."

"Your Majesty believes that Mohamed Ali can do this thing that you desire, and that, in the doing of it, he will not become as the others?"

There was no hesitation in the young Sultan's reply, and that small fact kept him upon his throne.

"Were Mohamed Ali like the others he

would not have defied us openly as he has, but would have sought our smiles while his mind plotted against us. No. Our cousin is not only daring and able, but I am assured that he also loves his country if not his Sultan. Wherefore we would trust him with our throne."

"Then, Your Majesty," said the beggar, rising suddenly and straight and tearing the bandage from a perfectly healthy and glowing eye, "Mohamed Ali will serve you."

CHAPTER IV

"TRUTH?—AND WHAT IS TRUTH?"

THE bent back was gone, the face was no longer the face of the professional beggar, the mouth was parted in a smile, and it was the clear voice of Mohamed Ali which boomed the words. And then, before the amazed eyes of the Sultan and Kaid Dukali had contracted to normal, Mohamed Ali knelt swiftly again at the divan of Mulai Abd-el-Aziz.

Upon the Sultan's face amusement and something else slowly replaced surprize. His eyes sought Dukali's, and found them glowing. Dukali nodded his head as a man nods who thinks that he should have known. His master nodded likewise, and extended his hand to the man who for a year had defied him and his troops.

"Rise, cousin," he said.

And with a flash of insight, as Mohamed Ali obeyed the command—

"You are now satisfied of our sincerity?"

"I am satisfied, Your Majesty."

"And you have no fear that now—now that Mohamed Ali, outlaw, is within our palace walls——"

There was no need for him to complete the question. Mohamed Ali's laugh filled the little room.

"Had I feared, oh Sidna, I would still be Aisa, the beggar."

"You are a man such as our father, Mulai el-Hassan was. May Allah bestow blessings upon him!"

"I served him," replied Mohamed Ali swiftly. "And loved him. Now I shall serve his son as best I may."

"And the son of Mulai el-Hassan will serve Mohamed Ali also to the extent of granting full pardon for his—his——"

The royal tongue stumbled in search for the proper word.

"Indiscretions?" suggested Mohamed Ali smiling.

"It will do. Indiscretions. Although that does not seem to be precisely the word." The Sultan's expressive lips twitched.

"But that, Your Majesty, Mohamed Ali can not accept."

"Can not accept? You do not wish pardon for your crimes?"

This time the word came forth.

"No," answered Mohamed Ali. His bold eyes held those of the young Shareef. "No. Not until my mission is accomplished."

"Ah-h," breathed the Sultan, his face clearing again.

"Such was the offer," continued Mohamed Ali. "Was it not so, Dukali? That pardon was to depend upon my success!"

"It was so, Mohamed," agreed Dukali.

"And such being the bargain," went on Mohamed Ali, "it is best that it remain so. I ask no favors, Your Majesty, even from the Sultan. I think Your Majesty understands."

The Commander of the Faithful nodded.

"We understand, Mohamed Ali, and we do not think we would have had you do otherwise. But you have daring!"

"Independence might be a better word, Your Majesty."

"We accept that word also," replied the Sultan. "So be it. And thus you remain outlaw for a space. Somehow—somehow we feel the need of you, Mohamed Ali."

"It were better so, Sidna. For reasons which do not concern me, as well as for reasons which do. Outlaw still, the Throne will not be responsible for my acts. But of still greater importance is the fact that thus will dust be thrown in the eyes of your enemies and mine."

"It is a point well made," agreed His Majesty.

"There is nothing further to be known by me concerning this treasure?" asked Mohamed Ali.

"I have told him," explained Dukali, "all that we know."

"There is nothing else then," said the Sultan. "We know that somewhere in Rabat the treasure is hidden. That Abd-es-Selam knows where it lies, and is planning to get it to use in his efforts to wreck our empire. He is a traitor! He is a traitor! But as yet we can not prove it. All we could do was to bring him to the palace, as a Chamberlain, where we could watch him somewhat. But that is no protection. He plots with both French and German, hoping to become governor when the empire shall die. No, we can tell you nothing more. But we are assured that Abd-es-Selam is now endeavoring to secure the treasure."

"The matter is in our hands," assented Mohamed Ali. "It may be—it may be that in the course of this business certain ones will have to be removed. For that I should like the approval of Your Majesty in advance of the need."

"It is granted. Leave us safe—" he smiled tiredly— "Leave us safe our friend Dukali, and you may remove without much danger of working injustice or in bringing regret to our heart."

"That is good," commended Mohamed Ali. "When the security of thrones and nations is concerned one can not be squeamish. Not to mention my own head."

"And so—" he rose—"and so I begin my work. There is need of haste, I think."

"Great need," acquiesced the Sultan. "There is but a month left in which to cut the rope which Europe has placed about our neck."

"The rope shall be cut, Sidna, or Mohamed Ali will not be here to see it drawn taut. With your permission I go. But wait, I have just remembered. As I waited at the door, a certain Kaid Andus, whom I tricked once by this same blind beggar's costume, saw me. And I think—I think he remembered. In fact, I am quite sure he remembered. But Dukali opened the door just then and bade me enter. Perhaps—and your Majesty desires—it would be well to inquire if he has—hm—done anything."

"Inquire, Dukali," requested the Sultan.

Dukali parted the wall hangings and clapped his hands. The captain of the palace guards appeared almost instantly. Dukali, standing so as to conceal those within the room, asked if there were news connected with Kaid Andus. The captain grunted.

"He is a fool, sidi. Half an hour ago he had the palace in a turmoil looking for a certain blind beggar whom he vowed was Mohamed Ali, the outlaw. As if Mohamed Ali would dare come here as a blind beggar or otherwise! Moreover—moreover——"

The captain hesitated. Dukali voiced his thought.

"Moreover, he told that he saw this beggar with me. Is it not true?"

"Yes, sidi. That is what he said. However, he found his beggar sitting at the entrance to your quarters, sidi. Haled him up and investigated most thoroughly an indecently filthy eye-bandage, and a ragged *djellaba*, and Allah remembers what else. With the sole result that he found the beggar to be one Aisa, the One-Eyed, and not Mohamed Ali at all. After which the beggar disappeared, I know not where."

Dukali dismissed him, and turned a puzzled face upon Mohamed Ali, who was chuckling, and thence upon the Sultan, whose bewilderment was manifest.

"Oh," explained Mohamed Ali. "That was just a little precaution of mine. It was Aisa, the One-Eyed, you see. I had him come and wait quietly at your door, my thought being that if anything should arise, he might be useful. I hope it teaches Kaid Andus a lesson. He should not form the habit of seizing innocent beggars under the belief that they are outlaws."

"Allah, what a man!" exploded the Sultan.

But Dukali only shook his head, as one who should never be surprized, and both he and Mohamed Ali bowed low as His Majesty lifted a hand in blessing and farewell, and dropped the curtains behind him.

On their way back to the apartments of Dukali, Kaid Andus with two companions approached. At sight of the beggar, the Kaid's companions turned upon him faces of mirth, and voiced words that stung. But Mohamed Ali, the bandage again in place, glared at him with one eye as he passed and called down a generous curse upon him. To which Kaid Andus made no reply save a black scowl and half-mouthed epithet which brought from Mohamed Ali's lips a cracked laugh of mirth.

"Thus it is with all this little world, Dukali," he said. "We hold error and think it is truth, and when truth faces us, we think it falsehood."

CHAPTER V

"ALLAH GIVES ME MY FATHER, BUT I MAY CHOOSE MY OWN MASTER."

NOW UP to the moment that Mohamed Ali came face to face with Kaid Andus in the corridor leading to the Sultan's quarters, his mind was vacant of plans. He had left his feet to the direction of Allah. But the incident of the seizure of the real Aisa, the One-Eyed, by Kaid Andus, and the meeting between the Kaid and the pseudo-Aisa, gave Mohamed Ali a plan which he thought would serve him for the present at least. As Aisa the beggar whose identity had been established to the full satisfaction and chagrin of Kaid Andus and others, he, Mohamed Ali, would remain about the palace for a few day, seeing and hearing what he might see and hear.

Alms-giving plays an important part in the practical religion of Islam. "Be constant in prayer, and give alms," was one of the commands of the Prophet. Wherefore there is much purchasing of merit by alms-giving and the feeding and care of beggars.

Mohamed Ali knew that his begging bowl would bring him sustenance wherever he might be, and that no man in the palace, great or humble, would turn away the poor and the stranger as represented by the supposed mendicant. Thus he would be at the very core of things to observe and to be guided by his observations. And moreover, he would be in immediate touch with Kaid Dukali should emergencies arise.

The Kaid balked at the plan when Mohamed Ali submitted it to him, but after a little reflection, was mastered by the child-like simplicity and impudence of it. Wherefore:

"If Allah has you not in His keeping," he said, "He assuredly has no sense of humor."

And watched his shuffle from the room to seek food and a place to sleep.

The royal palace is a big structure, each part connected with the others by corridors. Mohamed Ali chose one at random, and started down it, carrying in one hand a worn black begging bowl. It mattered little to him at the moment whither he went. He desired to think, and for that purpose one corridor was as good as another.

Now the burden of Mohamed Ali's thoughts rested upon Abd-es-Selam, the Chamberlain. Abd-es-Selam, and apparently no one else, knew where the treasure was hidden. He reviewed in his mind the events connected with the sudden death of Mulai el-Hassan, such as were known.

That active Sultan had died, as Dukali had said, outside the high walls of Rabat city. Bou Hamed, his chief Vizier, desiring to make the boy Abd-el-Aziz Sultan, instead of permitting one of el-Hassan's brothers to seize the throne, had concealed the fact of the death except from some of his own slaves, had cut a hole through the fifty feet thickness of the city wall and in dead of night carried the body of el-Hassan to a hiding-place in the city. The next day he had summoned the *ulema*, or city fathers, into the mosque, had then placed his own troops at the door and had given the fathers their choice of proclaiming Abd-el-Aziz Sultan of Morocco, or of being shot down as they went out.

Abd-es-Selam had been with Mulai el-Hassan on this last expedition and had possession of the treasure collected by the monarch from friends and enemies.

What, pondered Mohamed Ali, could be guessed from these facts? Only, it seemed, that Abd-es-Selam had known of the Sultan's death at once, despite Bou Hamed's efforts to keep it a state secret. Wherefore at the time Bou Hamed was forcing the naming of a new Sultan, Abd-es-Selam was secreting the treasure of which he was custodian. Mohamed Ali wondered why Bou Hamed, as regent, had not wrung the truth from Abd-es-Selam, not knowing that the attempt had been made, and had failed. Abd-es-Selam had wit. But from the known facts——

Suddenly there flashed through Mohamed Ali's head the recollection that the great city wall of Rabat—seventy feet high and fifty thick—was honey-combed with rooms and passages, most of them long ago sealed up and forgotten.

"Hmph!" observed Mohamed Ali to himself. "If Bou Hamed cut a hole through the wall, Abd-se-Selam probably followed that hole till he found a place to hide the treasure. But that is only saying that the gold is in the city wall. As there must be five miles of walls, the treasure is not yet found. And now it grows late. Let us seek a patron who will give us a little food and a spot in which to sleep. Which way shall I go? Down this way? Very good." He shuffled along. "Yes, also we must net a few plotters along the road. Notably Abd-es-Selam, Abd-es-Selam, Abd-es— *Allah kerim!*"

He beat his forehead impatiently with his knuckles.

"My head grows fit for nothing save to put over a city gate! Or to eat with! Abd-es-Selam of course! It is he who shall give me food and a place to sleep for a few days!"

And, feeling better, he strode ahead in

search of the lodgings of the man he was pitted against.

Thus it came about that Abd-se-Selam, returning somewhat late to his apartment, found squatting at his door a beggar who at once began a husky petition for food and permission to sleep in the hall. Abd-es-Selam ignored his pleas, but a little later one of the servants, more charitable than the master, led him off to the servants' quarters, fed him abundantly, and granted permission for him to spend the night wherever he wished. Mohamed Ali invoked the blessing of Allah upon him, disposed of the food, sought a corner of the room and, wrapping himself in his *djellaba*, apparently composed himself to sleep.

But although his bones were at rest, his brain was not. This suddenly conceived plan to walk in the very shadow of Abd-se-Selam, and its success, thus far at least, gave him food for thought. He had gained a certain advantage, and the situation amused him. But while one might pick the lock to the tiger's cage, and enter, it was not well to overlook the fact that it might be extremely difficult to get out.

And that it was a tiger's cage he was in, Mohamed Ali had no doubt. He knew Abd-es-Selam and Abd-es-Selam's reputation quite well enough to realize acutely that if his present host had the slightest suspicion that the body of Mohamed Ali lay beneath the patched *djellaba* of the beggar, Mohamed Ali's life was not worth a grain of dust. And Mohamed Ali rarely, if ever, made that mistake which has been fatal to so many brilliant minds. He never underestimated the ability or strength of his enemy. To a striking degree he possessed the power to judge that ability and that strength, and this power was both his shield and sword.

Time passed, and sleep pressed lightly upon the eyes of Mohamed Ali. His ego sank slowly into the dark sea of unconsciousness and then rose again swiftly, as a diver who sees danger. Two black slaves had entered the room and oblivious to the figure which lay in the shadows beyond the light of the solitary candle-lantern, began to talk in hushed voices.

"——and, if you were not my brother, I should not tell you these things."

Mohamed Ali caught the incomplete sentence.

"As it is, your life is as my own and, by Allah! I know that shortly neither of them may be worth a copper coin. I, at least, prefer to seek safety in flight, and immediate flight at that."

"There is no doubt in your mind——"

The voice was slow, as of a man thinking deeply.

"Doubt? How can there be doubt when, as I told you, I chanced to overhear a certain thing, and so crept up behind the curtains so that I might hear all. Aye, and see, too. There were our master and that German *medico* whose name I do not remember——"

"Langmann."

His brother's voice held scorn, for Herr Langmann was known for his services in securing European virgins for the young Sultan's harem.

"Langmann, yes. The name comes badly to my tongue. And so I overheard the plot to poison the Sidna and to elevate in his place that half-brother of his who loves the Germans. Now the plot may succeed although I, for one, do not desire it so to do. In that case we are safe. But if it fails and if our master be detected, he and all his household including ourselves, will quickly cease to be. Wherefore——"

"Wherefore I am of your opinion. Let us seek safety. We can go whence we came, and none can find us. And how will they try to take the life of the Sidna?"

"That I do not know. Lan, the German, spoke of a certain machine with which to make pictures. I was forced to go away before I heard. But what I know is sufficient. Let us go and make ready."

"Yes, let us go speedily. And the journey that our master planned—to Rabat—is that abandoned?"

"No, we are making ready——"

The words ceased to reach the ears of Mohamed Ali as the two slaves left the room. But he had heard enough to cause him to forget that he had had no sleep. Here was news for him to chew on. Allah had rewarded his temerity abundantly, in truth.

"And," he muttered, "if my head was worth little more than nothing before, what, by the beard of the Prophet, is it worth now? This thing of getting the money for Abd-el-Aziz begins to take on another color. Now let us try to think what Mohamed Ali can do in the present matter."

The *djellabaed* figure stirred restlessly, rolled over and suddenly sat upright, staring round-eyed at the distant candle light.

"Now," said Mohamed Ali to himself audibly, "a while ago I said that my head grows fit only to nail over a city gate. Again I say it. For a quarter of an hour I have been only thinking that I thought."

He rose quietly, and slipped out of the room. Then through the corridors, deserted save for sleepy guards who had no interest in a restless beggar so long as he kept to the passage-ways, he found his way to the palace yard, and to the stables of Kaid Dukali.

"Fillal!"

He whispered the name into the darkness, and waited.

"Fillal!"

A little louder this time.

"The servant sleeps while the master labors," he grumbled.

Then from the blackness came a cough, the sound of straw disturbed and another voice whispered the name "Aisa" as the unseen speaker approached.

"Now," when they were in the courtyard, "these are the things you are to do, and the precise manner in which you are to do them."

He spoke slowly for a little space while Fillal, the negro, nodded his head or grunted in token of understanding.

"Good," said Mohamed Ali at last. "Now go, and remember that your life answers to me for your failure."

"I have never failed Mohamed Ali.

There was pride and a little childish resentment in the voice.

"That is true," agreed Mohamed Ali. "But go speedily."

And he returned to the lodgings of Abd-es-Selam to sleep a little and to think much before the early sun called the palace folk to another day.

CHAPTER VI

"HE WHO USES MY NAME, PLAYS WITH MY DESTINY."

MOHAMED ALI found little welcome from Dukali's servant, Mustapha, but by reminding him with some force of his master's words on the previous day, at last succeeded in sending word to the Kaid. Again the beggar entered the luxurious quarters of the Sultan's intimate, and found him disposing lazily of breakfast.

"Although I might as well declare my true self as to be seen in the house of Kaid Dukali," said Mohamed Ali, "the matter is of sufficient importance to take the risk."

And he told in a few words the story of the preceding night. Dukali's laziness fled.

"A machine for making pictures, a camera. Hmph! They take advantage of my master's interest in photography, that same interest which has set half the religious fanatics of the country to charging him with breaking the laws of Islam!"

He referred to that prohibition of the Prophet against the making of an image of any living thing, which accounts for there being none of the graphic form of art among the Moslems.

"And this machine is designed to commit murder. Very well, I shall see that it does not reach the Sultan. Abd-es-Selam grows brave and the Germans desperate. No, I am wrong. Abd-es-Selam will see to it that his skirts are clear. The blame will fall on Langmann, that is assured. But——"

"I have thought the same," agreed Mohamed Ali. "And the manner seems clear. He will present the machine in his capacity of Chamberlain."

"You are right," Dukali interrupted him. "And, if it fails in its purpose or if that purpose is thwarted, rather, Abd-es-Selam will be only an innocent Chamberlain who has been tricked by Herr Langmann."

"Precisely," agreed Mohamed Ali.

"But Abd-es-Selam's slaves? The one who overheard?"

"Gone," said Mohamed Ali. Could I stop him? I am only Aisa, the beggar.

"True again. And that seems to be the end of that string. Now, let us see. Even though we can not catch Abd-es-Selam in this case, there is the German to be thought of. Assuredly we should be able to cause this matter to dispose of at least one plotter."

"So I had thought."

"No doubt. I cannot imagine your failing to do so. And your plan!"

"As Allah is my witness, I have none," protested Mohamed Ali. "Such things are not for me. Clean, open intrigue is one thing, but this business of plotting and murder and Allah knows what else, finds me unprepared. It is your meat, Dukali, and you must eat it. As for me, I have business to attend to elsewhere."

He arose.

"Allah go with thee," said Dukali. "And as for this other matter, I think I can manage it."

"No doubt, no doubt, as a rider manages his favorite horse," replied Mohamed Ali dryly, and shuffled out, leaving the Kaid to his problem.

Now Mohamed Ali had noted what seemed to him an unusual stirring about in the house of Abd-es-Selam, and suspected that it was due to preparations for the departure of the master to Rabat. Wherefore he returned to the house and took up a position near the kitchen where he could observe what was going on. He had sat but a little while when Abd-es-Selam, followed by several servants, entered. Catching sight of the beggar Abd-es-Selam approached him.

"Who are you and what do you here?" he asked.

The beggar fingered his begging bowl nervously, looking timidly at his questioner.

"I—I—manifestly the sidi has forgotten that—that last night he found me at his door and generously instructed one of his slaves to give me food and shelter."

This was an untruth, but the beggar knew his man.

"It is good to give food and shelter to the poor and to the stranger. So says the Book. And it also says——"

"Perhaps—" Abd-es-Selam's voice chopped off his words bluntly— "Perhaps the Book is as well known to me as to you. I asked who you are?"

Now did the heart of Mohamed Ali turn sick for a swift moment. But he mastered his alarm.

"I—I am he they call Aisa, the One-Eyed. A Sanussiyah pilgrim, master, making pilgrimage to the shrine of Mulai Idrees at Meknez. Yes, yes. Aisa, the One-Eyed. Yesterday, or was it longer ago, they mistook me for Mohamed Ali. Ha-ha!" His laugh was like a hen's cackle. "Mistook me, Aisa, the beggar, who has but one eye. Only one eye, sidi. Do you wish to see where the other was?"

One filthy paw touched the bandage.

"No, in the name of Allah! Let it be! I have just breakfasted. Mohamed Ali—" He broke into laughter, long and loud— "Mohamed Ali! He would feel complimented, could he but know. Ha-ha-ha!"

"Yes, it is very amusing," agreed the beggar, and cackled again. "Because I remember seeing Mohamed Ali once, and I do not think he is so very handsome."

"*Allah kerim!*" Abd-es-Selam stared at the beggar. "It is in all men, as I suspected. But eat well then today, for tomorrow my house will be closed. I go upon a journey."

"Perhaps — perhaps the sidi would let me accompany his caravan. As far as Meknez?"

"Impossible," replied Abd-es-Selam shortly. "I travel speedily. So eat and go elsewhere."

He proceeded on his way, leaving the beggar throwing blessings and quotations from the Book after him. But as soon as he was out of sight, Mohamed Ali rose and shuffled swiftly away. Abd-es-Selam was to take the road for Rabat in the morning, wherefore it was time that Mohamed Ali arranged certain matters he had in mind. These occupied him till late in the afternoon—his contact with those whom he had summoned from various places had to be most discreet—and, having finished them, he was shuffling along a little street near the Meknez gate. As he reached a little green, iron-studded door set in the blank, white wall, the door opened a hand's breadth and a whisper came forth.

A whisper, but it beat upon Mohamed Ali's ears like a clap of thunder, for it formed his name. His start of alarm and surprize caused his begging bowl to clatter upon the cobbles and, in stooping to regain it, he had time to think and to cast a quick look at the door. It told him nothing, but from behind it again came the whisper, louder this time—

"Mohamed Ali."

At the same instant the door opened a hand's breadth farther and a black, pudgy hand reached out.

"Enter, beggar," now said a voice. "I wish to give alms."

"This is far from good," thought Mohamed Ali. "But if I do not go in, I shall not know who this is that summons beggars in the name of Mohamed Ali. And if I do not know, I am helpless against it."

Aloud, he began the recitation of a verse from the Koran, and haltingly approached the door. It swung open at his touch, but no one was to be seen; only a voice that urged him to enter and be not afraid.

Mohamed Ali entered—his hand upon the knife concealed in his belt—and closed the door behind him. Then dark curtains which apparently divided one large room into two smaller ones, were drawn back, and a big negro, dressed in voluminous garments of black satin, held the curtains in either hand and exposed white teeth in a grin of amusement.

But Mohamed Ali had now completely recovered from his shock, and again was Aisa, the beggar.

"You summoned me to give alms!" he whined, and held forth the begging bowl. The negro let loose of the curtains and strode forward, his satin *djellaba* whispering like a thousand spirits.

"You play the part well," he said, and the smile still flickered in his full round face. "Quite well enough to—to deceive Abd-es-Selamor even your friend Dukali. But not well enough to deceive the Master of the Djinnoon."

Mohamed Ali suppressed a curse, and a little wave of panic swept through him. This man talked of hidden matters and, what then? He was no stranger to Mohamed Ali. He had visited him once in Tangier, this negro who called himself Master of the Djinnoon and who was also known as the Black Magician, and had witnessed some extraordinary things. Yet, afterwards he had found more or less reasonable explanations for them. But now he decided to cling to his impersonation as long as he could.

"Did I not tell you in Tangier, that when I desired to see you again, I would send my spirits to bring you to me? I desired to see you. I sent them. And here you are. Now, in order that we may give proper attention to matters of some importance, in order that you may lay aside the burden of deceit for a moment, let me tell you that I not only know you to be Mohamed Ali, but that you have been staying in the house of Abd-es-Selam; that Abd-es-Selam goes on the morrow to Rabat; that his purpose is to secure that which you wish to secure for His Maj——"

"Enough! Name of Allah, enough!" The words were wrenched from the beggar's lips and, in a changed voice:

"Then I am Mohamed Ali, and there are many things to be adjusted before you or I leave this room alive."

His hand sought the knife handle, and he took a step toward the Black Magician. But that strange person held out a hand of friendship.

CHAPTER VII

"THE WISE MAN AVOIDS THE UNKNOWN."

"THAT is better, Mohamed Ali." The Master of the Djinnoon was still smiling. "Excellent as you are as a beggar, I much prefer you as Mohamed Ali, lately outlaw, now servant of the Sultan and Vizier-to-be."

"You play with death, Habib." There was no fear in Mohamed Ali's voice, but a tone of great amazement. "These things are not matters talked of in the streets and market-places. How came you by them, then? By Allah! There is treason somewhere. Rank treason. And it lies between the Sultan, Kaid Dukali and myself."

"You wrong all three. Have you forgotten that I may learn all things through my *djinnoon?* Has the matter of Hadj Hosein, and a certain letter which Mohamed Ali desired—and which I secured for him—passed so quickly from your memory?"

"Hmph!" grunted Mohamed Ali. "You rendered me a service, and for that I thank you. But I am not to be fooled by this talk of *djinnoon* and magic. Everything has a cause, and I have spent much of my life ascertaining the causes of things."

"Good enough," said Habib. "I prefer to deal with a sage than with a fool. But be seated, and let us talk more at ease."

Mohamed Ali reluctantly squatted upon the cushions.

"How do you know these things?" he asked bluntly. "And, if it is agreeable to you, I should like a direct answer."

For a long moment the Black Magician gazed thoughtfully into the unabashed eyes of Mohamed Ali. Then his own eyes closed slowly and he began to speak, but his lips were almost motionless. The voice seemed to come from deep within him.

"In the chambers of Kaid Dukali there sit, at the present moment, four men. There is Dukali, there is Abd-es-Selam, there is the French consul and the German who calls himself Langmann."

Mohamed Ali shivered. He felt little chills along his back, as of a cold finger drawn upon the skin.

"Kaid Dukali holds in his hands a little machine. I have never seen one. It is for the making of pictures upon paper. Kaid Dukali speaks.

" 'My Master, the Sultan, as you know,

is much interested in the art of making pictures,' he says. 'And friends who know this often send him gifts, such as this.' He pats the machine. 'This one came today through the office of His Majesty's Chamberlain, Abd-es-Selam. Abd-es-Selam at the moment, does not know the name of the giver. But my master, being otherwise occupied, has permitted me to use it and so to discover accurately the manner of its operation. But alas, I am inexperienced with such things. Can you—' He addresses the Frenchman— 'Can you operate it, perchance? So that you could take our photograph?' The Frenchman shakes his head.

" 'I have never used one,' he says. 'But Herr Langmann, as I know, is very proficient in their use.'

" 'Good,' cried Dukali, and passes the machine to the German, whose hands tremble as he receives it. 'Will you, then, Herr Langmann, explain how it operates?' Dukali requests.

"Now Herr Langmann grows very white and his words tremble, and Abd-es-Selam's eyes are half closed. The German touches the machine, opens and closes it and opens it again, and swallows frequently.

"This—this kind of machine I do not know," he at last manages to say.

" 'Nevertheless,' says Dukali, 'the principle is the same in all of them, is it not? I observe readily how the plates are carried, and how the camera opens; but, how is the lens uncovered to make the picture? There is that little golden tube, at the end of a rubber one, with what seems to be a plunger in it. Is that, by any chance, the arrangement which makes the picture?'

" 'You—you have not tried?' asked the German.

" 'Oh no,' answers Dukali. 'I waited for you. And now, you say you press the plunger?'

" 'Yes—no—yes.' The German is sweating."

So was Mohamed Ali, but he was not now afraid, only tense as a fiddle-string. The monotone of the Master of the Djinnoon continued, inflectionless.

" 'Do so, then, and take my portrait,' commands Dukali. 'Or, better still, let us take that of the French consul.' He moves to the side of the German, and points at the consul the machine in the German's hands.

" 'Now, let us see. You put your finger upon the little plunger and——'

" 'No—no—no!' cries the German. All look at him, but only the French Consul with amazement.

"Now Dukali laughs and seizes the hand of the German, and forces one finger towards the machine. The German struggles. Dukali still laughs. He presses the German's finger upon the plunger. Langmann cries loudly, jerks his hand away, runs from the room."

"Allah!" exclaimed Mohamed Ali beneath his breath. "And I thought Dukali had grown soft!"

The voice of the Magician droned on.

" 'What—what is all this?' asks the French consul. 'Herr Langmann, has he suddenly lost his reason?'

" 'No, but he has lost something even greater, I fear,' replies Dukali, looking keenly at Abd-es-Selam, who returns his look without a tremor. 'Look you at this. I invited you to come here that you might see something that would interest you. Also, I desired a witness of your standing.'

"He carries the machine to the French consul, and carefully presses the plunger, touching only the very edge. A little needle comes out.

" 'Now observe, also,' says Dukali, and twists the top of the plunger. It comes off, and shows a little inner tube in which the needle lies. It is filled with a dark liquid which smells like almonds!'

" '*Mon dieu!*' exclaims the Frenchman, his eyes wide. 'That—that is prussic acid. And the needle, you say that camera was sent to His Majesty?'

"Yes,' replies Dukali. 'By——'

He pauses a little, and looks through half closed eyes at Abd-es-Selam. 'By Herr Langmann himself. Is that not manifest?'

" 'Sufficiently so. It would assuredly have killed the Sultan,' says the Frenchman.

" 'Precisely as it will shortly kill Herr Langmann,' assents Dukali."

"He is dead already," growled Mohamed Ali, but the black clairvoyant did not hear him.

" 'I had forgotten that you forced the needle into his finger. He will surely die. And the German government? Will it not make inquiries?' Thus asks the Frenchman.

" 'Not so long as the affair was witnessed by the French consul,' answers Dukali. He laughs. 'I think you will know how to make use of the incident—and I am sure that Abd-es-Selam will be able to prevent any unpleasant inquiries. For that matter, I doubt whether any but us three will know what killed Herr Langmann. And it is good that he dies. He was a man utterly without virtue. Is it not so—Abd-es-Selam?'

"And Abd-es-Selam replies, 'I know little of him, but I believe you speak the truth.' "

A deep exhalation came from the lungs of the Black Magician. He straightened out of the sunken position his great hulk of flesh had taken, he opened his eyes as though pulling the eyelids apart with a physical effort, and his dull eyes with their pupils narrowed to the size of pinheads, sought those of Mohamed Ali.

"Clairvoyance," Mohamed Ali answered the question in the eyes. "It is marvellous, but not new. I have seen it done before. And I have some learning. But it was well done, and I do not doubt the truth of your sayings. However, it may or it may not explain other matters of greater importance to me. We will let those matters pass for the present."

The head of Mohamed Ali had been working swiftly. If this Master of the Djinnoon was only a distractingly efficient practicioner of the occult or if he was something that he pretended not to be, the results were about the same. Whether his *djinnoon* told him state secrets, or whether he was in the confidence of those in high places, the Sultan, Dukali, Abd-es-Selam.

Mohamed Ali rejected the *djinnoon* theory, which left him the impossibility of choice between friends and enemies. Obviously Habib was going to stick to his spirits, and obviously he, Mohamed Ali, could not kill him out of hand without running a very grave risk of destroying one who was on the right side. But—but there were other things to be thought of as well.

"It would have been much more to the point," he said, "could you have told me something of the thing I seek."

He watched the black man closely.

"The treasure of Mulai Hassan," said Habib with a voice as matter-of-fact and tremorless as if he spoke of commonly known matters.

"*Allah kerim!*" Mohamed Ali shouted noiselessly to himself.

And aloud:

"Yes, the treasure of Mulai el-Hassan. Where does it lie?"

"That I do not know, can not know. What men do and say I may learn, but my *djinnoon* do not tell me that any besides Abd-es-Selam knows that which you ask, as he has told no one. If my *djinnoon* could tell me of hidden gold—the world is full of it—I should own the world."

This seemed reasonable to Mohamed Ali, although just why he could not say. However, this was not the time for discussions of the occult. A matter he had been resolving in his head came out now. Better to know what side this Master of the Djinnoon stood upon.

"Do you know Abd-es-Selam?"

"I know him. He—he comes sometimes to consult my *djinnoon*."

"Hmph! And can you send your *djinnoon* for him as you say you did for me?"

"Assuredly."

"Then—" Mohamed Ali paused a little before casting his dice— "then send for him, as you are friendly to me, and tell him anything which will cause him to take a certain one-eyed beggar with his caravan to Rabat."

The Black Magician pondered a moment. Then:

"It is a simple matter, and I shall do as you ask. I shall tell him yes, that if he can take a one-eyed beggar with him, he will bring him good fortune."

"Which will be lies."

"Which will be lies," echoed Habib. "But he will do it, nevertheless. Assuredly he will do it, for he believes greatly in luck and in my *djinnoon*."

"Good, then." Mohamed Ali rose. "Now, I shall go and ascertain the truth of your vision."

"Go with Allah," said Habib to his back, and added, "You will encounter the body of Herr Langmann being carried to the German Consulate."

"That," mumbled Mohamed Ali to himself, "is quite probable if the rest of it is true. And all the rest of it is very probable. Yes, knowing one single fact, many things may be judged."

CHAPTER VIII

"HE WHO HAS ONE EYE IS NOT BLIND"

MOHAMED ALI, the beggar, went forth from the house of the Black Magician with many things to think about. Wherefore he did not at once take up the road which led to the palace but, instead, squatted in a shady spot beside an archway, composed the folds of his old *djellaba* about him, put his well-worn begging bowl in his lap and proceeded to chew upon the facts which faced him. Also he proceeded to try to ascertain just what he, Mohamed Ali, thought of himself, his abilities, his judgment, and his wisdom. Which, at the moment, was not a vast amount.

"Hmph!"

He addressed his begging bowl, and such few travelers as passed him by no doubt supposed him to be acquiring merit by repetition of the Koranic blessing.

"Very like I am a fool. I have traded the safety of my hills and the comparative security of open, direct warfare, which is all that is fit for a man, for the dangers of the city and its unguessed undercurrents. Every step I take shows me not only that I am in another trap, but that I have just escaped from one which I did not recognize as a trap. This is not well. Even though Allah—praise be to His Name!—has thus far in my life smiled upon me, it is manifest that if one man demands so much of His attentions that it interferes with His care of others, that man shall presently find himself in deep trouble. And I—but who comes here? Abd-es-Selam! Abd-es-Selam of a certainty!"

He held out his begging bowl a little way and set up the wail:

"*All'arbi! All'arbi!* Alms in the name of Allah!"

Abd-es-Selam, clad in a flowing white *sulham* and riding a sleek, white mule, glanced at the source of the cries, and his eyes showed recognition of the beggar. His hand sought his *shakarah*, and tossed a small silver coin into the air. Although the distance between them was a dozen feet, the coin struck fairly against the bottom of the bowl. The well-to-do Moor, unless he is a miser, confers many alms in such manner each time he rides forth.

"Your bowl will be better filled here than in my house," said Abd-es-Selam. "Here it is best you remain."

The beggar, unlike those of occidental races, paid no attention to the coin, did not even glance at it, but mumbled what the alms-giver, if he heard at all, would have supposed to be the usual blessing, which it was not.

"Hmph!" growled the beggar, as the white mule whisked around a corner. "I am not so sure that such is the case. However, I wonder whither the mule carries Abd-es-Selam. Is it not perfectly possible that the Black Magician knew that Abd-es-Selam was coming to see him? Asssuredly, assuredly. But that in no way explains——"

He rose and shuffled along in the direction taken by Abd-es-Selam, until a turn in the road brought the Magician's door into view. The white mule was tied to the door knocker.

"But that in no way explains a very considerable number of other things," he commented as he returned to his former seat. "One thing is certain. And the certain thing is that the Master or King or Sultan of the Djinnoon is a devil, and one to be watched with both eyes and both ears and with all the intelligence that Allah has bestowed upon me. When next I see Kaid Dukali I shall assuredly make some direct inquiries.

"Now, the immediate question is, do I or do I not trust my head to the word of the Black Magician? It seems to me that for the last few days I have done little but decide who should be the next to hold my life in his hands. Go to Rabat I must. Preferably in the caravan of Abd-es-Selam, where information assuredly is to be gained. But if the Magician reveals me to Abd-es-Selam, I shall shortly be dead and covered by a little pile of stones beside the road. However, the Magician knew me, and could have denounced me anyhow. Therefore, having to take the chance, willy-nilly, it were best that I play for the highest possible stakes. If Abd-es-Selam——"

The white mule turned the corner. The beggar, after one quick glance, turned his gaze in the other direction. The white mule clattered up and stopped.

"Yesterday," said Abd-es-Selam, "you desired to accompany my caravan to Meknez. Do you still so desire?"

"Yes, sidi, yes. I go to the shrine of Mulai Idrees at Meknez, *inshallah*."

"Very well, then. If you wish to go with the caravan, you will have food, and a mule to ride. But you must go with us beyond Meknez—to Rabat. On your return you may stop in Meknez."

Slowly the averted eyes of the beggar came around to look upon the rider.

"To Meknez, sidi?" whined the beggar. "To Meknez. To the shrine of Mulai Idrees. And I shall ride?"

"You shall ride, as I have said."

"But—but why does the sidi wish——"

"It is a whim of mine," replied Abd-es-Selam. "Perhaps I desire to acquire merit. But the reason is of no importance."

The beggar shook his head slowly.

"The sidi has said it is best I remain here. That here my begging bowl will be better filled than in his house!"

"But that—that was before I saw that I had a chance to perform a good deed. Now I say it is not true."

"There are alms to be gained here," the beggar pointed out. "Only this morning there have been many ——"

"I will put money in your bowl."

Abd-es-Selam grew impatient.

"Much money, sidi?" whined the beggar.

"Allah! Yes. Much money. Here!" He took a handful of silver coins from his *shakarah* and, leaning over, dropped them into the bowl. The one eye of the beggar looked at them without expression for a moment, then expectantly at the hand from which they had come.

"For another handful, O generous one——"

Again Abd-es-Selam dipped into his *shakarah* and drew forth a handful of silver. But then he paused and returned the coins to the bag.

"Come to my house at sunset," he commanded. "There I will give you the other handful. And—and if I have good fortune upon my journey, there will be yet another handful for you."

"I will come, sidi. I will come," promised the wailing voice of the beggar and for luck, threw a blessing after the rider as he spurred his mule.

Thus it came about that in the early morning the one-eyed beggar with two handfuls of silver in the greasy *shakarah* under his ancient *djellaba*, rode a flea-bitten, steel-jawed mule in the caravan of Abd-es-Selam, en route to Rabat the Red.

And, although as he rode the One-Eyed tried to think upon pleasant matters, he felt very profoundly that both the activities of a certain Mohamed Ali and the proposed *coup d'état* of His Majesty the Sultan, perhaps the fate of the Shareefian Empire itself, depended upon one very small matter. Did Abd-es-Selam know the beggar was not blind in one eye? Had the Black Magician betrayed him?

Mohamed Ali would have given his black beard to know.

CHAPTER IX

"HE WHO RIDES THROUGH A GATE AT LEAST FINDS HIMSELF ON THE OTHER SIDE THE WALL"

BETWEEN Fez, among the hills, and Rabat, upon the coast, lies a hundred miles or more of wild and rough country. A score of miles west of Fez is Meknez, the old capital of the empire, and then are no more cities, no more towns, few villages until the mouth of the Bu Regreg River, the trail leads to the twin towns of Rabat-Sallee.

The road—and it can scarcely be called that most of the time—runs almost entirely in the great province of Zemmur, and this is a restless province. Running up almost to the city gates of Fez, more than one Sultan has found it a harsh task to control its turbulent, independent people. And more than one monarch, too, has found it impossible. Rabat and Sallee have always excluded the foreigner, knowing that inevitably trouble followed in the footsteps of the Christian.

Sallee, the home and last defense of the far-famed Sallee Pirates, has never been more antagonistic to the "nasrene" than has Rabat, its sister city lying upon the south bank of the Bu Regreg. And both have fought incessantly the modern ideas and modern methods, knowing that all things modern come from other lands, and quoting eternally to themselves, "What is, is best."

As a consequence, there was to be found in Rabat a Moroccan life unveneered by foreign thought and customs, untarnished by contact with such infidel cities as Tangier and Fez, where the people bore most lightly the yoke of voluntary allegiance to the Sultan, not because he was their king, but because he was their religious head, ready to throw it off in a moment of resentment and close their provinces and their city gates to the whole world, even as they had closed them after Mulai el-Hassan had died.

The caravan of Abd-es-Selam did not take the road until long after sunrise, and darkness found it established for the night in a *fandak* at Meknez. From the rate of progress thus established it was manifest that at least four days would pass ere Abd-es-Selam slept in Rabat.

The caravan was not a big one. Abd-es-Selam rode at its head. Near to him, two of his personal servants, then the chief muleteer, followed by half a dozen pack animals, lightly laden, and serving as mounts for the servants of Abd-es-Selam. And last of all, squatting like all the others in a big, red-cloth saddle upon a mule, Abd-es-Selam's invited guest, the one-eyed beggar.

Now came four days of disappointment to Mohamed Ali. For four days he kept his eyes and ears open and saw and heard nothing of importance. For three nights he squatted with the servants about their camp fires and listened to interminable talk, but heard no word which might aid him. As a result of which he rode through the Fez Gate of Rabat knowing no more than he had known when he left the capital, except, perhaps, that Abd-es-Selam did not suspect him to be aught save the one-eyed mendicant who was to bring him luck.

So Mohamed Ali rode into Rabat in the golden glow of a summer sunset, knowing just what he had known four days before. And highly dissatisfied with that knowledge.

"But," he consoled himself with a proverb, "he who rides through a gate at least finds himself on the other side the wall." And added for good measure the one which runs, "Expect not the results of a journey until the journey is ended."

And as it was ordained, various equations in the scheme of things were awaiting Mohamed Ali's arrival in Rabat.

But for the next hour he squatted in a corner of the big *fandak*, watching the camp-fires spring into life, following with his eyes the passage of candle-lanterns hither and thither, listening to the innumerable noises of the caravanserai, and sniffing, with the real criticism of hunger, the odors which arose from the bubbling cooking pots.

Eventually he rose and took a position near one of the camp-fires, and to him shortly came a servant bearing a big bowl of *kesk'soo* and baked chicken, into which he plunged his hand with the universal grace of Islam.

"*Bismillah*, in the name of Allah."

After a little while, having cleaned the bowl and licked each finger in the order prescribed by Moslem convention, he arose, adjusted the bandage over his eye a trifle, and shuffled through the *fandak* gate and into a star-studded velvet darkness.

He had gone but a dozen paces beyond the gate when a dark shadow detached itself from the darker shadow of the *fandak* wall and followed him silently. The faint light of the stars revealed that the figure wore a dirty white bandage over one eye, precisely the same as that worn by Mohamed Ali. And the glint upon a shiny begging bowl marked him also as a mendicant.

To him Mohamed Ali paid no attention for a space, seemed not to hear him. But, having gotten well away from the *fandak* lights, he stopped and whirled suddenly, an automatic pistol in his hand. But he put it away quickly and somewhat sheepishly when he saw the bandaged head of his pursuer.

"Aisa," he said softly.

"Go on! Go on!" commanded Aisa the One-Eyed. "I follow. We are yet too near."

Mohamed Ali led on around a corner, and came to a row of closed dark stores on an almost deserted street. There he stopped and squatted down against a wall and placed his begging bowl in his lap. Aisa, coming up a moment later, did likewise.

"And now," said Mohamed Ali, "let us talk. Or rather, as I have nothing to say, let me listen to what you can tell me."

"What I know is not much, but it may have a value, nevertheless."

Aisa hitched his *djellaba* closer about him. The night air grew chilly.

"I followed your instructions, of course. There are now here in Rabat the twelve good men you desired should be prepared. They are all from your own villages in Anjerah, and Mustapha is in command of them."

"That is well," observed Mohamed Ali. "There may be need for them, although so far the game has been played with wits instead of guns. And they lie where?"

"Mustapha may always be found in the coffee-house of Achmed Larbi, opposite the great mosque. Now, this, I have learned, and this only: Abd-es-Selam has recently, within a month, begun a business here, that of buying and selling dates, figs, nuts, grain and other products of the south. His two brothers are in charge of this business, and they are said to be not only brave men, but loyal to Abd-es-Selam, which is a strange thing for brothers.

"Now I come to the meat of the matter, I think. Abd-es-Selam and his brothers have caused to be built against the city wall, and perhaps two hundred paces south of the Fassi Gate, a big storehouse, a storehouse twice as big as any other in Rabat. To this have been coming, for some weeks, many caravans with grain and dates and other things. The story is abroad that they send a great caravan of goods to some northern port for shipment to Europe. The bar at the river mouth here, as you are aware, makes it always dangerous and expensive and most times impossible to ship by sea from here. And that is all I know," he concluded simply.

MOHAMED ALI was silent for a space; then:

"That storehouse against the city wall is a matter of interest to me. As is also the great caravan going north. To say nothing of the two loyal brothers! Hmph! You have done well, Aisa. I think I begin to see the plan if, as may be the case, Abd-es-Selam would follow somewhat the lines which I would follow in similar circumstances. And have you ascertained where the hole was cut through the wall by Bou Hamed?"

"Ah yes. That I had fogotten. It was near the southeastern corner of the wall."

"Near Abd-es-Selam's new building?"

"No, Mohamed. Not near. Perhaps two hundred yards away."

"Near enough! Near enough! If the wall is hollow. Yes, I begin to see. And now there is one other with whom I would talk. Know you of a maker of sacks of the sort that grain is carried in?"

"There is one not far away, the only one in Rabat, it is said. And I believe he works tonight. At least, he was still working by candle-light as I came toward the *fandak*." He leaned forward and wrinkled up his face in a squint. "Yes, you can see the light in his shop, I think, at the far end of this same street. I think that must be his light."

"I go," said Mohamed Ali. "But stop, there is one other thing. There must not be two one-eyed beggars in Rabat just now. At least not two who resemble each other in several ways. Therefore do you bandage both your eyes. It will not interfere with your sight. The trick is bent with age."

Swiftly Aisa pulled the bandage around his head so that both eyes seemed to be covered.

"Good," approved Mohamed Ali. "And now, watch my comings and goings as best you may and be as often near the storehouse of Abd-es-Selam as you can arrange. Do that which is the obvious thing to do in case I can not give an order. *Selaama!*"

He shuffled swiftly toward the light in the distance, and soon came to a tiny shop wherein sat a gray-beard busily engaged in sewing sacks. Beside him stood a steaming pot of tea. At the sound of slippers, the worker looked up and saw the beggar looking with his unbandaged eye at the tea-pot.

"The grace of Allah upon you," invoked the beggar.

"And upon you also," replied the bagmaker. And being a man of generous heart, he added:

"Sit you down here upon my doorway and drink a cup of tea. It is lonely here, but I have work which must be done."

Mohamed Ali sat down in the doorway and sipped slowly at the tea.

"Ah-h," he breathed. "That is good tea. It is good for a beggar's heart. May Allah bless thee again. But why is it necessary to work two days in one!"

"There is work to do, and I need the money. The *khalifa* has increased the tax on this little shop until the sun no longer gives light enough to pay it with. And so, as Sid Abd-es-Selam— Drink your tea quickly, it will warm you and your hands will not shake— As Sid Abd-es-Selam, the merchant, desired two hundred bags by daybreak——"

A shrug completed the sentence.

"Two hundred! That is a great many, is it not?"

"Yes. To be made in a day and a night. Especially as they are not to be all of the same size. One hundred and fifty of them are grain sacks of the usual size. The others are to be of canvas for dried dates. Now, as all the world knows—" the gray-beard grew loquacious and sipped his tea slowly, despite the piles of material awaiting the cutting and sewing— "now, as all the world knows, dates are always transported in sacks of a certain size.

"I had a hundred such sacks already made. But they would not serve. No. The sacks had to be four inches longer than the usual size. Wealth, I think, makes people queer. Abd-es-Selam could have saved a handful of silver if he had bought the bags which were already made. But no. Four inches longer they must be. And in that four inches he can get not more than a kilo of dates. It is foolishness."

"No doubt! No doubt!" agreed Mohamed Ali. "But there is no accounting for the madness of the rich, as you say."

"See here!"

The bag-maker flipped a canvas sack upon the ground at his feet and stretched another beside it. Four inches only. One could never tell the difference."

"That is true," responded Mohamed Ali, slowly. "That is very true. One could never tell the difference."

He drained his cup, smacked his lips, belched generously in the oriental mode of expressing appreciation of food and drink and, leaving graybeard sewing and grumbling, shuffled back to the *fandak* to sleep.

CHAPTER X

"THOUGH THE LIPS ARE SILENT, THE HEAD MAY LABOR"

DAYLIGHT brought the *fandak* to its feet to make loud and multitudinous noises in the business of breaking fast of man and beast. The beggar who slept in a corner of the wall was awake with the foremost, but continued to lie quiet in the hope of overhearing something which might give him a clue to Abd-es-Selam's plans. Although, in truth, he believed that he already knew enough of them to act upon.

This belief was strengthened when he caught snatches of a talk between the chief muleteer and one of his men.

"Abd-es-Selam desires only the swiftest animals, remember," the muleteer was saying. "And of those we brought, there are not more than half a dozen which are good enough."

He pointed out a number of the animals, and moved off to inspect them.

Now this speech had considerable significance. Beasts of burden were not ordinarily selected for their speed. Therefore, some one was going somewhere in haste, the beasts laden somewhat more lightly than usual. And the meat of this was that, inasmuch as one does not rush madly with a cargo of grain or dates or other such stuff, these swift mules must be going somewhere with a burden which might well bear investigation.

Wherefore, having warmed his belly with a glassful of very black and very thick and very powerful coffee, the beggar went shuffling forth from the *fandak* to seek the storehouse of Abd-es-Selam and his brothers. Near the storehouse he saw a beggar squatting in the morning sun, a bandage concealing both eyes. Mohamed Ali passed him with a greeting.

"And upon you be the peace of Allah, also," replied the sightless one. "There is much activity over yonder. Alms, in the name of Allah the Compassionate."

"Watch well today." The one-eyed threw this over his shoulder. "And remain near by."

At the storehouse there was great action, even as Aisa had said. All about were horses and mules and even a dozen hulking camels lying in military formation, grumbling and baring their teeth and biting at bare brown legs in expression of their dissatisfaction with the business of being laden.

"Camels!" growled Mohamed Ali to himself. "Swift mules and camels, they do not hang together. Hmph! Obviously some one goes slowly with the camels while some one else goes speedily with swift mules. Hmph! The clouds begin to lift somewhat. Alms! Alms in the name of the Compassionate One!" He thrust his begging bowl into the belly of a hastening muleteer.

"Is the day so short you must beg before dawn?" the man growled as he thrust the bowl aside.

"No," retorted the beggar. "The day is long enough. It is the stinginess of man which causes me to begin early."

"Beg from those who have more time than I."

The muleteer strode off, and the beggar shuffled slowly about among the noisy activities, lifting his voice occasionally in the wail for alms. Some beasts he found already laden, and beside them he paused long enough to examine the bags of merchandise, grain apparently. But these bags were not what he sought.

Now, Mohamed Ali knew that these early morning activities did not mean an early morning start. No Moroccan caravan can get under way without a full day, almost, of talk and argument and quarrels and fights, of bickerings which begin with the loading of the first beast, and continue until the caravan has reached its destination. For this reason, the first lap of a journey is invariably short, and Mohamed Ali knew that the caravan would bivouac that night not many miles from Rabat. Also that the next morning would see it on the road at sunrise.

A gray-bearded ancient paused near him to wipe the sweat from his face and to curse all camels ever created by Allah. Mohamed Ali condoled with him and asked a question

"You load for where?"

"Fez," responded the sweating one briefly. "With a hundred beasts. And, if they were my camels, I should assuredly cut the throat of that big, gray brute at the end."

He pointed with a grimy, gnarled finger, and went back to his work.

"Fez," thought Mohamed Ali. "The big, slow caravan goes to Fez. Hmph! And the swift one? I wonder."

He continued his wanderings slowly, speaking to some one now and then, but learning nothing further. Noontide came, and with it a little time for rest and food. Mohamed Ali, seeing that the storehouse was almost deserted, entered, begging bowl in hand, but with silent lips. The two or three laborers in the big building were smoking or eating, and paid no attention to the beggar.

Now, Mohamed Ali's feet were led by a purpose. Somewhere in that storehouse, he thought, were certain bags which were not of standard size. He wished to see them. And so he made his way quietly to the rear of the building, his one eye alert. He was about to give up his quest when, in one corner, he saw a big bulk covered closely by a canvas. Going to it, he lifted one corner. A pile of canvas bags. He stretched his thumb and little finger to measure them, and a hand fell heavily upon his shoulder. He turned to look into the face of Abd-es-Selam, who stared at him with narrowed eyes.

"Alms! sidi. In the name ——"

He got no further. Abd-es-Selam, with a disconcertingly swift motion, jerked the bandage from the beggar's head. Then, with a cry, flung himself upon the mendicant.

"Mohamed Ali!" he cried.

And again as if even as he fought, the surprize crowded to the surface.

Mohamed Ali was his equal in strength, and more, but two others came swiftly to the aid of Abd-es-Selam, and very shortly the outlaw lay trussed with a corner of his *sulham* filling his mouth. But no word did Abd-es-Selam say in revelation of the identity of his captive. In fact, he recovered one of Mohmead Ali's eyes with the bandage.

Now this situation was highly unpleasant to Mohamed Ali. And Abd-es-Selam added to his disgust when he taunted him with his helplessness.

"I shall take you to Fez with me, Mohamed Ali," he jibed, sitting on a pile of sacks near the bound outlaw. "Yes, to Fez, to the Sultan. It is inconvenient, that is true. Or rather, I mean it would be much easier to take your head in one of these bags in which you were so interested. But as His Majesty has changed his offer, making it for Mohamed Ali alive—" This was news to Mohamed Ali, but was far from disagreeable—"I shall have to take you to him complete."

"I suppose he himself desires the pleasure of witnessing your death so that there may be no mistake as in the case of Kaids Aisa and Brahim. Besides——"

He broke off to laugh. Most unpleasantly, in Mohamed Ali's opinion.

"Besides, I suspect that His Majesty will be most embarrassed when I do take you to him."

A note of anger crept into his voice, and he included the two others in his speech, so that Mohamed Ali knew them for his brothers.

"I begin to see why he changed the form of payment for you and your head. But do not think that it will be in his power to release you. He would not dare. I shall demand punishment for you, which will also be punishment for the young fool who sits upon the throne. And I shall get it, even though I must appeal to the people of Fez. If I do so appeal, not only do you die, but Abd-el-Aziz assuredly will cease to be Sultan. Truly Habib, the Black Magician told truth when he said a one-eyed beggar should bring me good fortune. Oh-ho! I have both you and your master safely in my hands now!"

Mohamed Ali was inclined to agree with him. Did Abd-es-Selam take him to the Sultan and demand punishment, no power on earth could save him his head or the Sultan his throne. The city would rise and demand punishment. Mohamed Ali had no misconceptions concerning popular judgment. The people would first have him executed and then would make of him a national hero. And the young Sultan hen his throne too insecurely to aid him. Truly, Abd-es-Selam held all the winning cards. Wherefore Mohamed Ali grew philosophic, closed his eyes and pretended to sleep, so that eventually Abd-es-Selam rose to go away. But he left one parting thought with his captive.

"And also, Mohamed Ali," he said, grinning, "I shall not take you to the Sultan as Mohamed Ali. No, no! You will go as the one-eyed, as the filthy-beggar with the bandage over one eye so that the people may laugh at you and also so that His Majesty may be further embarrassed. His Majesty. Bah! His Fool! Who tried to trick Abd-es-Selam!"

He called two guards to watch, and went away.

For an hour Mohamed Ali lay uncomfortably, and then Abd-es-Selam returned with his two brothers. They paid no further attention to him, but ordered the canvas sacks of dates carried out. As the last one went—and Mohamed Ali knew that as he lay there like a trussed fowl, the treasure of Mulai-el-Hassan was being carried off before his eyes—Abd-es-Selam spoke to his brothers.

"You can get away within the hour. It grows late. And I shall ride at once. Remember my instructions. Now go. And brothers though we are, your lives are forfeit to me if you fail. Send me two men here."

"We shall not fail. The matter is a simple one after all," replied one of the brothers, and they went out. Almost immediately two husky servants of Abd-es-Selam appeared.

"Tie that man upon a mule," he ordered. "And tie him well if you value your breath. If any ask why you do so, say that he has stolen from me and that I take him to Fez for punishment."

With grunts of understanding, the servants hauled Mohamed Ali to his feet. Five minutes later he was securely tied upon a flea-bitten mule, while many people unknown to him commented openly concerning his appearance and his morals.

And in five minutes more, the great caravan started to move. Two men rode close to the bound beggar. They valued their breath. And Mohamed Ali saw another smaller caravan, made up of swift mules, preparing also for departure.

"Hmph! There goes the treasure of Mulai Hassan," he reflected. "And here go I. Surely Allah makes a jest of me."

But at the city gate there was a pause and confusion, resulting from certain camels disputing as to which should be first through the gate, and here a brother beggar, with both eyes bandaged, blindly became entangled in the caravan and was nearly knocked down by the mule upon which Mohamed Ali was tied. There was opportunity for five words. Mohamed Ali said them.

CHAPTER XI.

"THAT WHICH IS TRUTH TODAY, TOMORROW IS FALSEHOOD."

THE big caravan traveled slowly, but not so slowly as time to Mohamed Ali. Those who had bound him had done their work well, with no thought of the physical comfort of the captive. Wherefore his ankles hurt from the rope which tied them together beneath the mule's belly, and his wrists were raw from the thongs that held them, crossed before him. And to add to his discomfort, the mule he rode was a little lame, and jolted every other step, so that the prisoner's backbone began to hurt in many places.

But his physical pain and discomfort were as nothing in comparison with his mental distress. In fact, he tried to keep his thoughts upon his bodily hurts, even though that must necessarily double them in order to escape from the pains of mind. Not for himself, these distressing thoughts, except as he was a factor in the great problem. So far as he himself, Mohamed Ali, the individual, was concerned, he was not at all worried. He was not afraid of adverse fortune nor of death itself, if it came to that. But as the man entrusted by the Sultan to save his throne and country, he was very grieved for Mohamed Ali.

He was not at all assured that his discovery by Abd-es-Selam was an accident. It seemed equally plausible that the Master of the Djinnoon had spoken a word to Abd-es-Selam, who thereafter had played with him, letting him believe himself unrecognized and safe until the moment of departure of the caravans. And yet, the surprize of Abd-es-Selam had not seemed to be pretense when he had snatched the bandage from the head of the beggar. However, one may simulate many emotions well, with proper warning.

But although the manner of his downfall could not be determined at the moment, the important thing was that he had fallen, and with him the hopes and plans of His Majesty and Dukali, as well as his own future activities as head of the Sultan's secret intelligence service. He could see no way out of it, no way to recover the ground he had lost. While the caravan of Abd-es-Selam made its slow way eastward towards Fez, expecting, desiring to be seized by the Sultan's forces and searched for possible treasure, the treasure, on the backs of picked mules, was going swiftly northward. Even could he manage to escape, the treasure would be beyond pursuit, and in this country were no means of electric communication whereby word might be sent ahead to Tangier to seize the caravan. By the time he reached Fez, Abd-es-Selam's brothers and the things they carried would be entirely safe.

But at last Mohamed Ali forced his mental stream into new channels.

"Between darkness and dawn," he quoted from the Book, "Allah may put an end to many trials."

He began to count the paces of the beast he rode. But the miles had gone by, although doubly long, and the sun fell low before the caravan came to a noisy halt near a *fandak* or, more accurately, a great corral where once a week a cattle market was held. His two guards untied the ropes from one ankle, pushed him inside the corral, re-tied the shin and joined in the business of preparing for the night. Shortly Abd-es-Selam came to examine his bonds and to repeat his warning to the two guards. Before going away, he stopped to grin down upon Mohamed Ali and to taunt him a little.

"Ho, beggar! Know you where the treasure of Mulai-el-Hassan is now?" he gibed.

"In the hands of traitors and dogs."

The answer was not to the liking of Abd-es-Selam, and he kicked the prostrate man with a slippered foot. The blow hurt not at all. The insult did.

"Perhaps. Perhaps," growled Abd-es-Selam. "Nevertheless, it is now without doubt nearing the *fandak* of Achmed Zawi, a good twenty-five miles northward. Tomorrow at this hour it will be— But no doubt you have estimated it yourself. Sleep well. The treasure is safe."

"Your head will pay some day," observed Mohamed Ali.

"That day when you shall tell His Majesty of the things you have seen, no doubt. And when he will dare take the word of Mohamed Ali, outlaw, against that of Abd-es-Selam, his chamberlain. And, also, there is the small matter of proof. Ho! Ho! You dream-beggar."

And he strode off, satisfied.

Now the cooking pots were on the fires and the stews were bubbling, and the smell of meat and vegetables and coffee and pungent wood smoke were in the air. Darkness had fallen like a dropped curtain, and with it had come a cold wind from off the sea, which made the fires a comfort to man and beast. Shortly one of the guards went away, to return with food for himself and his fellow guard and Mohamed Ali as well.

He was not a brute, and, although it was manifest that he intended to take no chances on the escape of his charge, he seemed to consider that even a thieving, one-eyed and ancient beggar has a belly which needs be filled occasionally. Wherefore he set beside the captive a generous bowl of *kesk'soo*, several slabs of bread like pieces of huge pancake and a glass of coffee.

Quickly all the bowls were emptied and fingers licked despite the captive's roped wrists. Then one guard brought forth a package of Algerian cigarets, made of black, strong tobacco treated with saltpeter to insure combustion. One he offered to Mohammed Ali, who smoked it, and then stretched out, drew the hood of his *djellaba* over his face, and bade them good night. For an hour they smoked and talked of the incidents of the day. Then they, too, lay down to sleep. And in another hour thereafter the *fandak* was quiet save for certain snorings, the fires died to great heaps of glowing coals, and only shadows moved a little now and then. Time passed, and even the most restless sank deep into the oblivion of sleep.

Suddenly the crash of rifle shots shattered the silence. Another volley, and a continued crashing and wild shouts. Bedlam broke loose. The *fandak* sought lights, and in so doing, fell over each other, and each thought the other to be an enemy. The red spurt of guns whipped the air, and these guns were in the *fandak*, not outside. A bullet struck a heap of embers, and the heap exploded like a volcano.

Mules and horses snorted and broke loose, trailing their picket ropes, to trip those who frantically sought lights. Here and there a match flared in unsteady hands, and a lantern glowed. A bullet struck one, and the scattered oil ignited. For a little space the *fandak* was lighted, but nothing was to be seen save a maelstrom of frightened or bewildered men and beasts.

And as suddenly as it had begun, the firing and the shouting ceased. There was the sound of horses' hoofs pounding away in the distance, and Abd-es-Selam, lantern in one hand and pistol in the other, shouted savage commands while he made his way to the spot where the beggar had lain.

His sigh of relief was audible even in the hubbub, when he saw a bound figure squatting upon the ground between the two guards, who looked about dazedly and squinted at the light. The storm had arisen, raged and passed so swiftly that they, like most of their slow-witted fellows, were scarcely fully awake.

For a little while Abd-es-Salem gazed at the bound beggar, who returned the stare and raised his hands awkwardly to adjust the hood of his *djellaba*, and to scratch beneath the bandage about his head. Then his attention was demanded by one of the guards.

"What—what was it?" asked the fellow.

"Ask some one who knows," growled Abd-es-Selam, and bestowed another kick upon the captive. "I thought—but never mind what I thought. Continue to guard this fellow well or misfortune will descend upon you swiftly."

He turned back to the middle of the *fandak* and began throwing commands here and there.

"Abd-es-Selam grows to be like an old woman," growled one of the guards. "A man does not run away whose feet are tied. I should like to know what all this business meant, but I am still sleepy and it is Abd-es-Selam's caravan, after all."

He composed himself again, following the example already set by the captive, and was soon imitated by his fellow guard. And eventually silence came once more to the *fandak*, to be broken this time only by dawn and the shouts of the caravan master announcing another day. Within an hour, the caravan had broken fast and was upon the road.

"Allah!" complained one of the guards who rode beside the one-eyed beggar upon a lame and flea-infested mule. "Allah! I am still sleepy. And I do not know yet what it was all about."

"Perhaps we shall find out later," offered the beggar. "It is not always possible to know the true meaning of a thing until a certain time has passed."

CHAPTER XII

"RAGS OR SILK—AND WHAT IS BENEATH?"

ABD-ES-SELAM pushed his caravan along, as one hurries who knows that at the end of the journey waits reward or love or revenge. But he who can hurry camels can hurry time itself, and so it was ten o'clock of the fourth day before the gates of Fez were reached.

Small attention had Abd-es-Selam paid to the beggar on the way. Nothing more than to assure himself each night that the captive's bonds were well tied, to repeat his commands to the guards and each morning, to satisfy his own eyes that the beggar was still there. But each time his eyes met the single orb of the mendicant, they glowed with hatred and victory. Once only, when they chanced to be out of hearing of others, did Abd-es-Selam taunt his prisoner.

"It seems to me that the formidable Mohamed Ali has been greatly overrated," he said. "And that I always suspected. Now he rides like a beaten child, in silence and obedience. Why does he not proclaim himself to my men? Perhaps there is one among them who might aid him to escape!"

"One does not seek lions in a kennel," answered the captive.

"Nor Mohamed Ali in beggar's rags," Abd-es-Selam's retort was quick.

"That also is true," the mendicant smiled a little. "Yet, who can tell what is beneath a garment or a face? A patched *djellaba* may cover a beggar or Mohamed Ali. A white *sulham* may cover an honest man—or Abd-es-Selam."

The man so taunted raised his whip as if to strike, but lowered it slowly.

"I can afford to wait," he growled, and with a curse rode off.

But with entrance into the crowded streets of the capital, Abd-es-Selam increased his watchfulness. Upon the great plains there was little chance for the escape of a fugitive, mounted upon a lame mule. In the throngs of the city, it were best to be on guard. Wherefore as they passed through the gate he took position beside the beggar. Just inside the gate was a small garrison of city guards. Upon their captain Abd-es-Selam called.

"I, His Majesty's chamberlain, desire two soldiers to ride with me to the palace. At once."

The captain gave a guttural order, and two red-coated, yellow-trousered, crimson-fezzed guards stepped forth and saluted Abd-es-Selam.

"Walk you one on each side of this beggar," ordered the chamberlain. "He is a thief whom I take to the Sultan."

The guards fell into place, and Abd-es-Selam turned to his caravan-master.

"I ride to the palace. Take you the caravan to my *fandak* and await my orders there."

Then, with a guard hanging to each stirrup of the captive's mule, the chamberlain rode swiftly toward the palace, and his triumph. A quarter of an hour was sufficient to see him in his own quarters. The beggar, bound, and now gagged again, lay upon the cushion whither the servants of Abd-es-Selam had carried and thrown him.

The chamberlain removed the dust of travel, donned clean clothing and made his way to the captain of the Sultan's bodyguard.

"Tell His Majesty that I desire audience with him," he said, and followed the captain to the threshold of the Sultan's house.

The captain opened a great door and swung it behind him. Abd-es-Selam waited impatiently. But even a chamberlain must be announced before entering the Presence. He heard the faint sound of a phonograph, and smiled grimly. "The boy amuses himself," he thought. "Presently he shall have a new sort of entertainment."

It was a short wait, however. The music stopped abruptly, and the captain again swung open the door and stood aside for Abd-es-Selam to pass. The chamberlain, with hatred and victory thrilling like an electric current in his blood, threw his *sulham* back over both shoulders, as they must who enter the Presence. He entered, took a dozen steps into the great room and bowed low to Mulai Abd-el-Aziz and again to Kaid Dukali, who sat beside him upon the cushions. He looked smilingly but keenly into each face. In that of the Sultan he found a puzzled chagrin, disappointment. In that of Kaid Dukali he fancied he saw fear. In which he may have seen truly, for Dukali, a quick reader of faces himself, had noted the triumph in Abd-es-Selam's eyes, and feared for Mohamed Ali.

"Approach," commanded the Sultan, "and make your business known."

The chamberlain strode forward, knelt swiftly in obeisance and then straightened.

"I bring a gift for Your Majesty," he said. "Will you order me to have the captain of the guards bring it hither?"

The eyes of the young monarch sought those of Dukali, but found there no suggestion.

"It is an order," he said then.

"And—and, Your Majesty, I would esteem it a boon could I be permitted to have the Vizier Saidi present. It is a matter which concerns him somewhat."

Now, the Vizier Saidi was suspected of being a friend to Abd-es-Selam, and of not being one of the Sultan's most ardent supporters. But he was a man of considerable wealth and power, and perhaps the foremost authority in the country upon Mohammedan law. The anxiety in Dukali's heart deepened.

"It is an unusual request," said the Sultan.

"And an unusual gift, Sidna," replied Abd-es-Selam, quickly. "Wherefore, as a favor——"

"Granted." His Majesty's tone was short. "Let us hope the gift is unusual enough to warrant the preparation made to present it. You have our leave to retire."

Swiftly—once out of the room where convention ruled that he must make his exist backing and bowing—Abd-es-Selam found the captain of the guards and had him send for the Vizier Saidi. Then he himself went to his own quarters and returned propelling the one-eyed beggar by the arm. At the entrance he found Saidi awaiting him. To him he whispered two words, a name, which brought a grunt of surprize and a swift look of question at the bandaged face.

Again the doors were opened by the captain. Again Abd-es-Selam stood before His Majesty, the beggar at his right, the Vizier Saidi at his left, and made obeisance. But there was no humbleness in the glance which he threw at the now pale Dukali, nor in the half sneer with which he noted the trembling hands of the Sultan. The captain of the guards took up a position behind them.

"Your Majesty," Abd-es-Selam spoke slowly. "It has ever been my aim to serve

Your Majesty to the best of my ability. But I have not always been convinced that Your Majesty has felt in me the confidence, and for me the friendliness which it has been my wish to inspire."

The Sultan moved a hand restlessly. There was insult in the motion, slight as it was; a repudiation of Abd-es-Selam and all his works. But the monarch's eyes, like those of Dukali, were fixed upon the beggar who stood with bent head before them. Mohamed Ali, beyond a doubt, was caught by the one he had set a trap for. The dirt of the *fandaks* clung to face and beard, and the bandage had slipped down a little so that it almost concealed both eyes. Dukali, seeking another evidence, leaned over until he could see the bound hands of the prisoner, who turned slightly as if consciously to help him. Upon a finger of the right hand was Mohamed Ali's ring, and Dukali's heart fell.

"Assuredly," he grieved, "there can be no mistake this time. Abd-es-Selam has had him captive and therefore has made certain."

As if in answer to his unvoiced words, the Chamberlain spoke.

"There is no doubt, no doubt at all, Your Majesty—" his eyes flickered with malice and his lips curled in a little grin—"that Your Majesty is aware that I am a faithful servant. For a long time I have desired to prove it to Your Majesty by some signal service. At last fortune smiled upon me. Allah thrust into my hands the person of——"

He paused, poised on the pinnacle of his triumph.

Kaid Dukali had been thinking swiftly. He perceived the things Abd-es-Selam had in mind. The Vizier Saidi had been desired as a witness because he was no friend of the Sultan, and because he was the country's chief exponent of the Koranic law. Truly Abd-es-Selam had won the game. Once the bandage was torn from the head of Mohamed Ali, the Sultan could not save him.

The Vizier knew The Law—and would tell it to the city. And the law was above even the Sultan. His failure to punish the outlaw for whom he had so long offered rewards, this in the hands of those who knew how to use it to the utmost, would be more than enough excuse for the city to rise and dethrone him, to set the country in that last flame which demands the fall of its ruler. The Kaid forgot the mission of Mohamed Ali, forgot that loss of the treasure meant national ruin, forgot all save that now two words hung between his friend and death. And as Abd-es-Selam paused and raised his hand toward the beggar's head, Dukali spoke:

"A moment." The upraised hand halted the action of the Chamberlain. "I, Kaid Dukali, formally charge the chamberlain, Abd-es-Selam, with conspiring against the life of the Sultan. My own head—" he turned toward the Sultan, and his eyes flashed— "my own head answers for the charge, Your Majesty."

"But we do not——"

"I have not told you, my master. But it is true. I repeat the charge."

"It is an empty one, as Allah is my witness," answered Abd-es-Selam. "Nay, more. It is a trick, only. This—there is a certain man who is friend, great friend to Kaid Dukali. It is for his sake that he lies."

The hand of Dukali flashed to the dagger at his belt as the word left the lips of the chamberlain.

"Your Majesty, my master——" he began, but the Sultan gave the signal for silence.

"And from you, Abd-es-Selam, silence for the moment, also," he commanded.

He closed his eyes as though weary. Then suddenly he opened them, rose swiftly and, with one hand stretched menacingly towards his Chamberlain, spoke with a voice which Kaid Dukali had never heard before, which brought him to his feet with a new hope.

"Abd-es-Selam." The monarch, suddenly strong, formed his words carefully. "We think you make a jest of us. You spoke of your desire to serve. You have never served us. You spoke of your loyalty. You have never been loyal. You spoke of your desire to share our confidence, but our confidence is not for our enemies. And at last you say you bring us a gift to be presented with much formality and in the presence of—of your friend, Saidi."

The Vizier winced at the Sultan's little hesitation, and at the slight emphasis he put upon the last three words.

"Now—now—" The voice deepened, menaced. "You bring us our gift, a filthy beggar! Think you that such a jest may be borne by us? Have we become so common, so low, so little to be respected, that a dog whom we have raised to our household may insult us with such a jest?"

Abd-es-Selam, attacked from an unexpected quarter, was startled, but his thoughts were swift. Dukali, seeing the manner in which this royal youth had risen to a seemingly hopeless situation, understanding the royal bluff his master was playing, trembled with admiration and hope.

"Go!" ordered the Sultan, and the word boomed through the room. "Go! Before I send you with my captain."

The captain of the guards stepped forward to the side of the chamberlain. But Abd-es-Selam's quick brain had reassured him. He saw that the Sultan was bluffing, but he saw also that, unless he had temerity to face the potentate's anger, his own head would pay the price. He bowed low.

"Very well, Your Majesty. I hear and obey. But first——"

With a motion so quick that the eyes could scarcely follow, he whipped the bandage from the beggar's head and stepped back, his face distorted with anger and malice.

"Observe my gift, Your Majesty." He bowed again. "Mohamed Ali."

Again he looked at the Sultan and then swiftly at the beggar.

"Allah!" he shouted. "Allah!"

A white vacant eye-socket stared at him out of a face which grinned cheerfully.

CHAPTER XIII

"NO PATH OF EVIL WITHOUT ITS QUICKSANDS."

THE effect of the beggar's face upon those who stared at it, was ludicrous, even though the situation bulged with tragedy.

"Now, perhaps, I may ask why I am tied up like a sack of meal by this man and carried here? Always insisting that I am Mohamed Ali, and not Aisa, the One-Eyed."

It was the voice of the beggar, and it cut the cord of formality. As he spoke he restored the bandage to its place. Human nature asserted itself. The relief of the Sultan and Dukali was so huge, the bewilderment of Vizier Saidi so evident, that even the amazement and terror of the chamberlain could not command gravity.

"Mohamed Ali!"

The Sultan's voice cracked, and reseating himself, he rocked with mirth.

"Mohamed Ali," echoed Dukali, his eyes seeking his master's. "Ho! Ho! Ho! A royal gift, Your Majesty. Royal indeed. A one-eyed beggar, a ragged *djellaba*, and Allah alone knows how many lice. Ho! Ho! Ho! Abd-es-Selam sets a new style in gifts from a chamberlain."

"Allah is my witness," cried Abd-es-Selam whom anger now consumed. "Allah is my witness, Your Majesty, that this man was Mohamed Ali."

"And a miracle no doubt changed him," the Sultan said dryly. His eyes gleamed, but not with friendship for his chamberlain.

"I meant—I mean that in Rabat I laid hands upon Mohamed Ali. Knowing that his capture was a thing dear to Your Majesty's heart, I bound him securely and started at once for Fez."

"Hoping to serve us?" offered the Sultan.

"Hoping to serve Your Majesty. But—but there was no opportunity. Allah! Perhaps I am not in my right mind. I myself watched. There was no chance of escape."

"But if Mohamed Ali escaped, what is the purpose of bringing this poor beggar in his stead?"

"He could not have escaped. And whence came this poor fool, I know not. Allah! And I have been guarding this beggar while Mohamed Ali——"

He stopped, and panic entered his heart. What had Mohamed Ali been doing while he, Abd-es-Selam, had been carrying the beggar to Fez? And how, in the name of Allah, had Mohamed Ali tricked him thus?

"At any rate, Your Majesty," he continued after a moment. "At any rate, you observe that my intentions were to serve you, even though something has occurred which I can not explain and which has taken my gift from us both. Assuredly Your Majesty will not punish one of his followers for—for such a misfortune."

The Sultan, his face composed and thoughtful again, looked at Kaid Dukali, and Dukali looked at him. The minds of both were busy with the same question. That Abd-es-Selam had held the person of Mohamed Ali neither doubted, nor that Mohamed Ali by a clever stroke, had freed himself and sent out in his place a hostage which should confound the plans of the chamberlain. But where was Mohamed

Ali now? Where was the treasure, if he had discovered it? Why had Abd-es-Selam returned so quickly to Fez?

The hangings which covered one side of the room parted slightly, and a court officer looked towards the group. Catching Dukali's eye, he made a signal which caused the Kaid to go to him. After a few words had been exchanged, Dukali again sought the Sultan's side, and murmured a sentence. His Majesty nodded his head and looked into his friend's eyes with a question. But Dukali's face showed nothing then, nor when he shortly commanded the beggar to follow him. They disappeared through the curtains, but a moment later reappeared, Dukali to take his place at the Sultan's side, the beggar to stand meekly by.

"We can not punish you for that, it is true," said the Sultan. "But there is another side to the matter which, apparently, you have not thought of. We mean this: That you say you had the person of our enemy, Mohamed Ali, but that he escaped from you. Now to our mind, you are to blame for that escape. Assuredly no one else is. Wherefore—" he turned suddenly to the Vizier Saidi—"wherefore is it not justice that for that he should be punished?"

Abd-es-Selam also turned upon the Vizier. His lips formed a word, but his teeth held it back.

"I—I— It would seem so, Sidna. Except that——"

"Very good," the Sultan cut him off. "Very good. You know the law."

He smiled a little. Abd-es-Selam could at least be justly isolated for a few days, and in a few days many things may happen. But here Dukali asked permission to speak.

"And what about the caravan, Abd-es-Selam?" he asked.

"It—it is in my *fandak*, of course."

"Hm! One is, I suppose. And the other?"

The face of the chamberlain paled a little.

"What other? I know of but one. That which I brought with me from Rabat, carrying grain for the most part."

"For the most part," repeated Dukali. "The other part was not, by chance, anything which—which belongs to His Majesty?"

"Which belongs to His Majesty? I know not what you mean." Abd-es-Selam spoke boldly enough, but the voice of danger shouted in his heart. "All that I have, the caravan included, of course, is at His Majesty's service."

"He means the treasure of Mulai el-Hassan."

It was the beggar who spoke, and to each his words brought a different emotion. The Sultan stared, the Vizier shook a bewildered head, Dukali smiled as a man smiles who knows of hidden matters and Abd-es-Selam's eyes narrowed as he looked at the one who spoke. He swallowed with an effort.

"The man is insane!" he said at last. "What is this treasure of Mulai el-Hassan of which he speaks?"

"That which your brothers carried northward from Rabat," answered the beggar.

"Allah! He dreams," cried Abd-es-Selam, but his palms were sweating and his words had claws which tore his throat. The Sultan stared alternately at the beggar and at Abd-es-Selam.

"No dream," replied the beggar. "Or else, perchance, the canvas sacks of dates, a hand's breadth longer than the usual size."

At sight of the spasm which twisted the face of his chamberlain, the Sultan started and, for a space his eyes bored into those of Abd-es-Selam. Then:

"So! So you have tried to rob us of that which is ours, even as I suspected."

"This is madness, Your Majesty. This beggar, he either dreams or lies."

"And yet he dreams or lies with a strange semblance to the truth." The Sultan motioned to the beggar. "Have you still other dreams, beggar?"

The beggar nodded slowly.

"Yes, Your Majesty. These things I know to be truth: First, the treasure of Mulai el-Hassan, your father, upon whom be peace, was taken from the city wall of Rabat where this man, Abd-es-Selam, hid it. It was divided, the gold and jewels, hidden in sacks especially made, of a little greater length, and surrounded by dried dates which, as you know, are heavy. Two caravans were formed. One, that which came hither with Abd-es-Selam, large and slow-traveling, bearing grain for the most part. The other bearing the treasure bags, was composed of swift mules which went northward. The two brothers of Abd-es-Selam——"

"Lies! Lies!"

"Silence!"

The Sultan's voice thundered in anger at

Abd-es-Selam, and the Captain of the Guards laid a warning hand upon his shoulder.

"The two brothers of Abd-es-Selam were in charge of the caravan which went northward. They were to carry the treasure to Tangier where, no doubt, a boat would be in waiting to take it to France. But the two brothers died upon the way before going very far. Mohamed Ali killed them."

"Mohamed Ali!" exclaimed the Sultan in surprize, and a swift flash of relief swept his face.

He looked at Dukali and smiled. That smile meant praise for Mohamed Ali, and was answered in kind. But Abd-es-Selam, though fear now pinched his features, was no coward.

"Do not believe it, Your Majesty," he cried. "This is another trick."

"Proceed," ordered the Sultan to the beggar, eyeing his chamberlain coldly.

"Yes, Mohamed Ali killed them both while his men were overpowering the others. You see, Your Majesty, Mohamed Ali had a dozen of his own men in Rabat for an emergency."

"But Mohamed Ali was my prisoner in Rabat," cried Abd-es-Selam. "As Allah is my witness."

"He speaks truth there," agreed the beggar. "He discovered Mohamed Ali and bound him and told him, unwisely, many things, desiring to taunt him. Things which were useful when Mohamed Ali regained his liberty."

"And that was accomplished in what manner?"

The Sultan leaned forward eagerly.

"Very simply. Mohamed Ali's men came upon Abd-es-Selam's caravan on the first night, turned the *fandak* into an uproar and replaced Mohamed Ali by his double."

"*Allah kerim!*" The exclamation came from Dukali. "Mohamed Ali escapes and with the same motion snares his captor in a pretty trap!"

The Sultan nodded, his eyes shining.

"And then," continued the beggar, "Mohamed Ali rode northward with his men who had rescued him, and overtook the other caravan of Abd-es-Selam by night of the following day. Horses are swifter even than swift mules. And, having overcome the caravan, Mohamed Ali put the heads of Abd-es-Selam's brothers in a sack and led the caravan back to Fez. It lies now in one of Your Majesty's *fandaks*. But the bags of dates and what is secreted within them are elsewhere."

He ceased, and the Sultan turned his eyes upon his chamberlain.

"What has Abd-es-Selam to say to this?" he asked sternly.

Now was the chamberlain convinced that through some jest of Allah his plans had been wrecked and revealed, and his head brought close to the executioner's sword. But, summoning all his strength of will, he played the only card he had left. Turning to the Vizier Saidi, he asked:

"It is the law, I think, that there must be proof, more proof than the mere word of a beggar, such as this one, against me."

"That is the law," agreed the Vizier.

"Then I must demand proof, Your Majesty. This beggar—" he cast a look of insult at the man—"this beggar has come by idle gossip and dreamed dreams. Unless he is a tool of my enemies. How knows he these things? It is impossible by his own admissions. He says I brought him in my own caravan, bound, to Fez. Assuredly he has not heard these wild tales here. Speak, miserable one."

"That I did not say," replied the beggar. "Not that you brought me bound to Fez."

"See, Your Majesty. Already he contradicts himself."

The chamberlain regained courage. Perhaps after all, this was only a trick to catch him, a trick carefully planned by the Sultan and Dukali.

"He admits having lied to Your Majesty. He told you first that I brought him here. Now he denies having said it. Now—" he turned upon the beggar—"now explain if you can explain."

"As you wish," answered the beggar. "You are confused, Abd-es-Selam. It was Aisa, the One-Eyed, who told you that. I am—" A quick hand tore aside the bandage—"Mohamed Ali."

CHAPTER XIV

"IF ALLAH IS TO JUDGE YOU, BE SURE OF YOUR CASE."

ABD-ES-SELAM, facing Mohamed Ali, closed his eyes as one in pain and swayed a little. But not by weakness had he fought, plotted and suffered his way from poverty and obscurity to wealth and position. Knowing now that he looked into the eyes of that destiny which an inscrutable fate had traced upon his forehead at birth, he regained control of himself with a mighty effort, an effort which drew his face into deep-cut lines and which tore at the eye-balls. And, with an exertion as that of a man lifting a great burden, he turned his head until he met the eyes of the Sultan.

"I have no further defense to make, Your Majesty." His voice was harsh. "On this charge," he added. "That your father, Mulai el-Hassan, entrusted me with his treasure, is true. That, upon his death and the seizure of power by that upstart, Bou Hamed, I concealed the treasure, is also true. Even though Mulai el-Hassan named Your Majesty as his successor, I did not believe it was his wish that Bou Hamed should become the actual sovereign. Wherefore—wherefore I acted in accord with my opinion. Had I revealed the secret to Bou Hamed—and Allah knows that he stopped only at torture to wring it from me—where would it have gone? With all else that the Sultan el-Hassan left behind him, into the hands of those who ever since have preyed upon Your Majesty and upon our country."

Now these were bold words, and for a moment all who heard them were startled. And for a space, also, were the waters of truth made muddy. But only for a little.

"And that," growled Mohamed Ali, "is the reason you attempt to send these treasures to France, where I suspect you were about to go yourself if your plans failed here."

"And who are you, Abd-es-Salem," demanded the Sultan, flushing, "to decide what is good and what is evil for our Empire? Am I Sultan, or no?"

Abd-es-Selam bowed silent affirmative.

"And therefore," continued His Majesty, "it appears to us that your words are nothing more than lies, and that you have tried to rob us of that which is ours, and have failed."

Again Abd-es-Selam bowed and said nothing.

"But, Your Majesty—" It was Dukali who spoke now. "There is still a more serious charge against this man. A little while ago I made the charge and offered my own head as hostage."

"And that charge I denied." Abd-es-Selam turned viciously upon Dukali. "Think you not that I understood the purpose of your accusation? That I failed to see it was to protect this, the beggar whom you also thought to be Mohamed Ali, your tool?"

"Let us see what Mohamed Ali can tell us of the matter," replied Dukali calmly.

"Speak, Mohamed," requested the Sultan.

"It came about in this wise, Your Majesty. In a beggar's garments I lay in the kitchens of Abd-es-Selam. There, at midnight, came two slaves, brothers, who were much afraid. I know not who they were. One of them had overheard, spied upon a meeting between Abd-es-Selam and the German, Langmann. It concerned the life of Your Majesty, which was to be taken by means of a machine for the making of portraits. The slaves were much afraid, as I have said, and decided to seek safety at once by flight to their native village. I, being only a beggar, could not detain them myself. But I informed Dukali of the affair, and—and he took the necessary steps, I believe."

"The first we have heard of it," said the Sultan, looking questioningly at Dukali. "We knew that Herr Langmann was found dead upon the street, but the physicians said that his heart had been weak."

"That could not have been the cause of death," said Dukali with cynical lips, "for Your Majesty well knows that Herr Langmann had no heart. But one should not jest concerning the dead, may he roast in *El Hotama!* The matters that happened were thus: I received the camera, which had a poisoned needle, and invited Langmann and Abd-es-Selam and the French consul to tea with me. Then—I showed the German how to operate the machine *with his own finger*. Thereupon he ran away and died. After which I explained the poison device to the French consul. He, I thought, would be a good witness, should one be needed."

A smile flashed across the face of the Sultan, and was gone.

"And this man Abd-es-Selam?"

"Oh, naturally he asserted that it was all the work of the German. Not having the slaves in our hands, we waited."

"This, Your Majesty," broke in Abd-es-Selam, "is another lie. The two slaves who ran away, I had beaten. Besides running away, they stole from me a considerable amount of money which they took with them. These lies they no doubt devised to protect themselves or for revenge upon me."

"And consequently, whispered them with fear and trembling, with lips touching ear at midnight in a room they supposed to be deserted."

Mohamed Ali's voice had a rough edge.

"Or, so far as I know, the lie was born in the head of Mohamed Ali himself," Abd-es-Selam offered.

"Allah!" thought Mohamed Ali. "This man is no coward at any rate. Almost—almost I could be merciful to him, were I the Sidna."

"At any rate, Your Majesty," continued Abd-es-Selam. "This tale is not evidence. Where are the slaves? It is not the law that what one claims to have overheard may be admitted as evidence. Is that not true, Saidi? Where are the slaves?"

"Yes, by Allah," thought Mohamed Ali further, "were I the Sultan, I should pardon and use this man. He plays his only card as though it were unbeatable. Where are the slaves? Hmph! He has us there."

And aloud:

"They will be brought hither in a short time."

Abd-es-Selam flashed an edged look at Mohamed Ali and shrugged his shoulders.

"Then we must wait until they are found."

His hesitation before the last word, as well as a little tightening of the lips, showed that he saw through the reason for the delay.

"And in the meantime, I can but deny this charge. And I do deny it, Allah be my judge."

"Let Allah be his judge," said Mohamed Ali quickly. "That is well."

He drew nearer the Sultan, and spoke swiftly in lowered voice. The Sultan reflected a moment, smiled and nodded.

"And in the meantime," concluded Mohamed Ali, "let him be watched most carefully, Your Majesty. He is a clever man and a brave one. And we do not desire to lose him."

"So be it," ordered the Sultan, with a motion to the captain of the guards. "Bind him."

The captain snapped a pair of handcuffs upon the chamberlain's wrists.

"Now take him into the next room. Never leave him. If he escapes you, it were better you should die by your own hand."

"He shall not escape, Your Majesty," answered the captain, and led away his captive.

"And you, Vizier Saidi, embodiment of the law—" The Sultan's voice was hard and tired—"await you in your own quarters until we shall send for you. Be sure you understand. In your own quarters. And let your lips be sealed with the seal of silence, unless you wish to die."

The Vizier bowed low, and departed.

"And I am weary. I must rest," said the Sultan. "No doubt you two—" his smile embraced Mohamed Ali and Dukali—"have matters to discuss. You are our friends and we love you both. Concerning recent matters, we shall speak to you a little later." He withdrew into a private room of which the doorway was concealed by curtains.

"And now," said Dukali, when the curtains fell again into place. "What about these slaves? Naturally I myself have sought them, but in vain."

"Hmph!" grunted Mohamed Ali. "He had us there! And whether they shall be forthcoming or not I am far from certain. To you I admit that I feel most foolish. Those slaves, as I said, I could not myself detain. Nevertheless, I had secreted at the time in your stables a trustworthy and intelligent black, Fillal, who has often been of aid to me. Him I found in the darkness and bade him secure aid and follow and capture the slaves. He did so, and took them to a place he knows of. But—and through no fault of his, for he was almost killed—they escaped."

"And you, of course, know not whither."

"Naturally. But now this is why I say I feel most foolish. Upon my arrival in Fez this morning and as I passed through the city gate, a hand was laid upon my shoulder. Do you know one called the Master of the *Djinnoon?*"

Mohamed Ali shot his question and watched Dukali with keen eyes. But, aside from a smile which might have been caused merely by the naming of such a one, he observed nothing.

"Of him I have heard."

"Hmph! Do you know him?"

"I have met him."

"Now, by Allah! Between you and me there must be no curtains henceforth. Listen——"

And Mohamed Ali told of the episode in the house of the Black Magician, at the very beginning of his task.

"And now," he concluded, "what I desire to know is, did you tell this dabbler in the occult anything concerning my mission? Is he in the confidence of His Majesty or yourself?"

Kaid Dukali shook his head slowly.

"Habib, the Magician, is a strange man. He has served me once. And my master once also. No more, I think. Things which are hidden from others are seen by him sometimes. But not always. I suspect, suspect only, mark you, that he is the head, in this country, of the Sanyssiyah secret service. And, if that be the case——"

"Allah! If that be the case," broke in Mohamed Ali, "he has a secret service which I can never hope to equal."

"Assuredly few things occur of which he does not learn quickly. But I think also, nay, I am certain, that he has clairvoyant power to a high degree. That he showed you."

"Now are many things made clearer." Relief was in Mohamed Ali's voice. "Manifestly the Black Magician and I must come to know each other better in order that we may watch each other more closely. But I am relieved. Perhaps he will keep his promise, but I have not told you. At the city gate a hand was laid upon my shoulder. I looked into the Magician's face. He knew me. Beyond a doubt he knew me, despite my rags and bandage and begging bowl——"

"What would Abd-es-Selam not have given for that perception!" commented Dukali.

"And he whispered: 'The missing slaves of Abd-es-Selam shall be brought to you today in midafternoon.' Only that, and he was gone."

"It was afternoon now," observed Dukali. "But I feel that the slaves will be here. He is a strange man, and a marvellously wise one."

"You believe at all in his *djinnoon*?"

"I believe in everything," replied Dukali, smiling. "Somewhat," he added, and laughed aloud at Mohamed Ali's look of scorn. "But now you must be weary. Let us go to my quarters. There you may rest while I discover what dates is within the bags of Abd-es-Selam. I hope greatly that the treasure is there. And that it will satisfy Europe until we can turn around."

"I think it will," answered Mohamed Ali. "It is there, assuredly, judging from the weight of the bags, although I had no time to examine it."

"You have saved the Sultan his throne."

"Hmph! And a dozen times, nearly, lost him the head of a faithful servant."

CHAPTER XV

"NEITHER SHALL YE WEAKEN THE POWER OF ALLAH, SO AS TO ESCAPE IT."—*Al Koran.*

MOHAMED ALI was summoned from slumber, even as he had been a few days previously among the Anjerah hills by Kaid Dukali, whose face now, as then, was a friendly lamp lighted by smiles. Mohamed Ali sat up yawning, stretching his great shoulders and blinking his eyes.

"The slaves are here," said Dukali.

All remnants of drowsiness left his friend, who sprang to his feet and stared into the eyes of the Kaid.

"Then—then the Master of the Djinnoon——"

"Precisely," Dukali nodded his head toward a doorway. "The Black Magician and the two slaves. They wait in there."

"Allah! I think now that I did not much trust his word when he said he would bring them. To me it sounded much like an idle boast. His *djinnoon*, I suppose."

Dukali laughed.

"Of course, to some extent. But when you told me that he had made such a promise, I recalled that I had heard that these two slaves had once belonged to him who calls himself the Master of the Djinnoon. Consequently, I argued that it would be highly probable that he knew of their hurried flight, and equally probable, that he knew the name of the village which had mothered them."

"And you told him this?"

"Oh, in a fashion. But I gave his *djinnoon* credit, also. There is no need, friend of mine, to disprove a tale which injures no one. There is much to be gained by appearing to believe even when one knows that a thing is false. Thereby one makes friends and opens many mouths which otherwise would be closed. And I do not think that all of the Black Magician's works can be so easily explained."

"Hmph! Perhaps not. No doubt I shall have plenty of occasion to find out in the future. Then, without doubt, the slaves were in his hands even when he told me at the city gate that he would bring them. Why couldn't he have said so?"

"That I believe to be true. Nevertheless, every man has the right to govern his own actions up to a certain variable point. If Habit desired to make somewhat of a mystery of the matter, that was his right, I think. And as he was serving us——"

"I am not complaining," interrupted Mohamed Ali. "Allah! I am pleased. I should still be pleased if His Majesty, the Master of the Djinnoon, should bring the slaves to us painted in all the colors of the rainbow, and calling them Princes of Abyssinia. What I want is the slaves, and I care not how why nor where. But as for the when, the sooner the better. I desire to see an end of Abd-es-Selam's works."

"Allah permitting," offered Dukali. "Now let us go. I have told His Majesty how things stand. He will come in a little while—" he glanced at the watch upon his wrist—"to sit in judgment upon Abd-es-Selam, to hear the slaves and to view the treasure. Which, as you have slept, I have prepared for his sight. Come. You may look upon it before he arrives."

"Even a beggar, such as I—" his hands brushed over the tattered *djellaba* which he still wore— "may enjoy sight of treasure."

They went swiftly toward the Sultan's audience chamber, which, by Dukali's orders, was now guarded by half a dozen warriors, stalwart and grim. They came to salute as the Kaid approached, and stared with curiosity at Dukali's companion.

Two great treasure chests of massive oak, bound with hand-wide iron bands, their lids thrown back, gaped hungrily at one end of the room. They were empty, but upon the floor all about them, were piles of gold coin, jewels in little baskets and two score bars of yellow gold, built up like a miniature mosque tower.

"I think that His Majesty has his million pounds sterling," said Mohamed Ali.

"More than that, or I am no judge," answered Dukali. "See here, and here."

He lifted a hand toward Mohamed Ali. Two necklaces, one of diamonds and the other of great rubies, hung from his fingers and flashed like chains of flame.

"There will be reward in this for you," he said. "And opportunity. You shall be the Haroun-el-Raschid of Morocco, and the power behind the throne."

"Hmph! And in due course shall die, no doubt, as Haroun the Great died, by poison."

"Allah forbid! And you shall be a Vizier with horsemen always to precede you——"

"Shouting, 'Behold, the head of the Sultan's secret service,'" offered Mohamed Ali, dryly. "That would be most excellent! No. If His Majesty desires to create a, let us say, political intelligence service, I am ready to serve him. But if he desires only a new Vizier, some one to wear a title gracefully and fill an office without labor, he had better name one Dukali for the post. For I'll have none of it. Life's too short and I'm too old, Dukali, to play monkey-on-a-string. Now you——"

His big laugh cut off his words. Dukali took the gibe in good spirit, but seized at once upon what had been said with an air of well-considered decision.

"Nevertheless, Mohamed," he said, "the matter is important. Be not hasty. Wait until His Majesty shall take the matter up with you."

"And there is another thing, Dukali. I think that if I accept the task, it will be necessary for me to talk with His Majesty as if he were only Mohamed Ali's brother instead of Sultan of Morocco. His unwise friendships, his thoughtless extravagance, his misplaced trusts——"

"Are things which he will thank Mohamed Ali to correct," said a calm voice in which there was just a hint of laughter.

Both men swung about to face the Sultan. Both sank to knee, but Abd-el-Aziz bade them rise.

"Yesterday I was not what I am today," he said. "No, even this afternoon I am not what I was this morning. And I believe, I hope——"

His voice faltered and his head bent. But quickly he straightened, held a hand out to each of his companions and, with the strength of sudden purpose, of a new manhood, said, while he looked into their eyes:

"Oh, I am Sultan, I know. Commander of the Faithful, Prince of Islam. But I am also young, and I need—I need true friends. Be them to me. Now, for once, if never again, I may say that I have been foolish, thoughtless, headstrong and worse."

"Nay, be not embarrassed, Mohamed Ali, and let truth be always upon your lips, for me at least. I speak in all sincerity. I need your friendship, I need your service, and if you give me both friendship and service—" a whimsical smile caressed his lips—"part of your reward will be the privilege of telling the truth, as you see it, to your ruler."

"That is high reward, Your Majesty," replied Mohamed Ali. "I think—" Mohamed Ali could be as whimsical as the young Sultan—"but I think perhaps the novelty of such a thing will be worth it to Your Majesty."

"It is a bargain then?" asked the Sultan.

"It is a bargain," assented Mohamed Ali.

The sovereign turned to Dukali.

"Still," he said, "here is one who tells me the truth, although perhaps not all of it. But he is my friend and loves me, as I love him."

"Which is the reason," offered Mohamed Ali, "that he does not tell you all the truth."

The eyebrows of the Sultan lifted, but he laughed.

"And therefore, Mohamed Ali will not love me, so that he may always tell me the entire truth."

"Love is blindness, and blindness is death," answered Mohamed Ali gravely. "Whereupon I shall assuredly try to keep from being blind."

"And this—" the Sultan moved toward the treasure strewn upon the floor—"the treasure of Mulai el-Hassan, my father," he cried.

Quick glances encompassed it, estimated its worth.

"More than is needed, Your Majesty," said Dukali.

"You have save our throne, Mohamed Ali. And I think the country. Our gratitude is yours, and your reward that which you may desire."

"I ask no reward, Your Majesty." Mohamed Ali's tone was blunt. "I served you—because—because I desired somewhat to serve my country."

"And that is the sort of service which deserves reward. The other sort is bought and paid for. Here, your hand."

Mohamed Ali held out his right hand. From his own fingers the Sultan drew a gold band, carved with the roses of Marraksh, but without a jewel, and slipped it upon that of Mohamed Ali.

"This, Mohamed Ali, has no value except that it belonged to my father, Mulai el-Hassan. Will you accept it?"

Mohamed Ali nodded gravely.

"It shall bind me to Your Majesty's service," he answered.

The Sultan drew two papers from his belt. One he handed to Mohamed Ali, the other to Dukali. To the former he said:

"This is the formal pardon for Mohamed Ali with good and sufficient reasons given, namely, that he has frustrated a plot against our life and prevented the robbing of us by Abd-es-Selam. That paper which you have, Dukali, is a copy of the proclamation, duly signed. See that it is posted today. Mohamed Ali, you are outlaw no longer."

Mohamed Ali dropped to one knee, then arose.

"I thank Your Majesty," he said.

"Your Viziership awaits you."

"That can not be, Your Majesty," demurred Mohamed Ali, and explained why. As he spoke the Sultan began to nod his head thoughtfully.

"You are right, Mohamed Ali," he said when he had finished. "We see that the honor is an empty one, to you at least. But, and more important, is the work to be done. So be it. From this moment you are the head of our political intelligence service." He smile grimly. "You shall be a busy man, Mohamed Ali, I assure you, if your task is to defend our country against foes within and without."

"No doubt! No doubt, Your Majesty. Yet, it is better to work than to pray in such a situation as now confronts us. And I may find time for an occasional prayer at that."

"There remains the matter of Abd-es-Selam, Your Majesty," said Dukali now. "It grows late. The slaves, as I informed Your Majesty, have been found, and are now here. They substantiate all that Mohamed Ali has said concerning them."

"Send for the Vizier Saidi, then," commanded the Sultan, "so that that light of the law may see what he may see."

Dukali sped upon the errand.

"And I, Your Majesty, must wait outside," said Mohamed Ali.

"You have our leave to retire," said the Sultan, and Mohamed Ali withdrew.

Dukali quickly returned, followed by Saidi, who had obeyed to the letter His Majesty's instructions to remain silent in his own quarters. He had not even thought of leaving them; had not even wished to speak. He was thoroughly cowed. Upon his heels entered the Master of the Djinnoon, swathed from head to foot in voluminous black satin garments, followed by the two black slaves. They prostrated themselves before the Sultan, and then at his command, rose and waited in silence.

"Bring Abd-es-Selam," now ordered the Sultan, seating himself upon a divan near the piles of treasure.

Duakli called, and in a moment the captain of the guards entered with the chamberlain.

Abd-es-Selam, immediately upon entering, caught sight of the two slaves. His footsteps faltered and his face grew pale. But paler still when he saw the treasure scattered about in such profusion. This was the end except for a moment when he should hear the whistle of the executioner's sword above his head. The end, unless Allah should inexplicably will it otherwise. With a bow which was scarcely obeisance, he stood before the Sultan.

"Abd-es-Selam," said the monarch, "you see your fate in the two slaves who stand there. There have told their stories. Do you wish to deny them?"

Abd-es-Selam shook his head.

"There is no use, Your Majesty."

"You are guilty, then, with Herr Langmann, in the attempt upon our life?"

"Guilty."

The word came through dry lips.

"The penalty you know. And you, Saidi, also."

Abd-es-Selam and the Vizier nodded assent.

"Still—" The Sultan paused a moment, as though debating. "You yourself requested that Allah be your judge. Is that not true?"

Abd-es-Selam nodded disinterestedly.

"Therefore, and at the request of our friend, Mohamed Ali, who discovered your plot, and who saved our treasure from your hands, Allah shall be your judge."

At these words the head of Abd-es-Selam jerked upward and bewilderment, doubt, suspicion. Each painted its imprint upon his face. His glance searched the room.

"He, Mohamed Ali, is not here," said the Sultan. "Nevertheless, it is as we said."

Abd-es-Selam looked incredulous now, and a tired and cynical smile twitched his lips. The Sultan clapped his hands thrice, the dark curtains at one side of the room were drawn back by unseen hands, and there, standing side by side, were two bandaged beggars, dressed in patched *djellabas*, bowls in hand, so alike that each seemed the reflection of the other.

"The judgment of Allah awaits you," said the Sultan. "One of these beggars is Mohamed Ali. One you must choose. If Allah guides your choice, if the one whom you select proves to be Mohamed Ali, and you shall remove the bandage yourself, your life is saved. Otherwise, you die at sunset. Now choose."

For a moment only Abd-es-Selam hesitated, looking at the Sultan. In his sovereign's face he saw nothing but severe honesty. There was no trick here. Then he looked again upon the beggars and smiled grimly at the situation. Assuredly Mohamed Ali, and not the Sultan, had conceived this form of trial. It had in it all the sardonic humor, in the face of death, for which Mohamed Ali was known.

He drew nearer and nearer to the twin beggars, who looked at him out of two unwinking eyes which were so mated they seemed to belong in one head instead of two.

He looked at the bandages, and they told him nothing. At the hands which held the begging bowl, and he knew not which was Mohamed Ali's and which was not. At the matted beards and full lips and patched *djellabas*, and realized that he might as well choose with eyes closed. Assuredly here was Mohamed Ali's vengeance in full, a greater vengeance than death itself.

Then something within his head snapped. He uttered a cry of "*Allah akbar!*" And reaching with shackled hands, tore the bandage from the head of the beggar nearest his right hand.

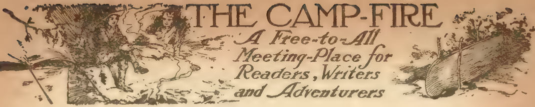
The white socket of a dead eye stared at him.

"Allah has judged," boomed the deep voice of the other beggar, and Mohamed Ali wrenched the bandage from his own head. "Allah has judged, as I had faith in Him."

A great silence filled the room. Abd-es-Selam slowly tore his gaze from the white eye-socket, looked upon Mohamed Ali, standing, bandage in hand, turned to face the Sultan who had risen and now stood like a figure of white justice.

"*Allah akbar!*" Abd-es-Selam's voice tore its way through a throat tight with fear and anger and horrible pain. "Allah——"

In that signal invented by his father, Mulai el-Hassan, Mulai Abd-el-Aziz shot his underjaw forward. The captain of the guards obeyed the death sign, and led his prisoner from the Presence.



THE CAMP-FIRE

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Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

IF YOU want to know about something that happened somewhere some time, ask Camp-Fire. Particularly if it happened in some out-of-the-way corner of the world. Quite possibly one of our comrades happened to be there, or, as in this case, several of them:

U. S. S. Savannah, At Sea Enroute from
Balboa, C. Z. to San Diego.

Will you allow me to say a few words to a comrade of the Camp-Fire through these columns? The letter appeared in the February 28, 1925, issue sent from Empalme, Sonora, Mexico and signed A. B. C. and from what I know of that country I don't blame him for not giving his name, but if he was there in July and August, 1913, I'll bet I know his name. I knew most every American then working in the S. P. shops in Empalme.

It may interest him to know that yesterday we passed Cape San Lucas and at this minute we are off Turtle Bay, not far from him.

WHAT A. B. C. says in regard to the biplane attempting to bomb the *Guerrero* is true. How well I know! I was not over 1000 yards, good torpedo range, from the *Guerrero* at the line. The rebels who were up in the hills back of Empalme were using field artillery to fire over the shops and town, trying to do their part to sink the gunboat. Needless to say their range was rather bum, and it kept the ship I was in, the good old *U. S. South Dakota*, busy to keep out of the way of their shells. The captain of the *Guerrero*, who happened to be a nervy Englishman, was one wise guy. Every time we would shift anchorage, he would too, to keep himself in between us and the shell fire of the rebels. I saw the four flights the biplane made and the forced landing he had to make on the tide flats between Guaymas and Empalme, later on I got ashore and took pictures of the plane and pilot, which I now have.

Perhaps A. B. C. will recall the time the ball team from the *S. D.* played the workers of the shops. September, I think this was. The writer played shortstop. Can you remember me, also, the time you lined up alongside the bar in the corner saloon on the waterfront in Guaymas with a bunch of sailors from a boat laying at the landing. Also the time of the wholesale execution of 36 rebels lined up in front of the Albin Hotel in Guaymas? Yes, I was there for seven long months.

I am sorry I can not tell him what became of the pilot and mechanic of the plane. That was the last time I heard of them.

Hoping A. B. C. gets this letter either through the mail or the columns of Camp-Fire, I remain—P. L. Cowgill, C.M.M.

SELDOM do I bring to Camp-Fire any praise of our magazine, but here is one of our "Ask Adventure" experts, a member of our writers' brigade and good comrade at our Camp-Fire who has done something that brings credit not only to himself but to "Ask Adventure," and here is another man, also qualified on all three of the above counts, who, in the real Camp-Fire spirit, is so pleased over the other comrade's accomplishment that he takes time to tell us all about it. Incidentally, it was our first news of it, the man himself never letting out a peep about it to us.

I pass it on because it makes me very proud of our "Ask Adventure" department, through both Mr. Harriman and Mr. Spears and through its other experts animated by the same spirit. And because in various ways it illustrates our Camp-Fire spirit and feeling—which the world needs very badly these days.

The enclosure was two full pages from the Los Angeles *Sunday Times*, naming E. E. Harriman as winner of its thousand dollar prize for the best "friendly letter" in its "Friendship Contest," a contest whose purpose was to make friends for California. Over 115,000 letters were written.

Here is the letter from Raymond S. Spears:

Inglewood, California.

My Dear Hoffman: Cast your eyes upon the enclosed clipping depicting Big Jim Harriman as the Friendliest Letter Writer in California.

I've preached you these many years you could not quite know the good "Ask Adventure" is doing (See me pat my own back) and here the big fellow comes rambling down the line to show what writing "Ask Adventure" letters with kindly spirit and sincere desire has done for one of your "Ask Adventure company.

Probably none of us quite so thoroughly realize the responsibility that lies in each letter answered as Big Jim. I doubt not at all that he has written even more thoroughly from the heart—not knowing he was doing so well, of course—to some boy or man, some family who came through *Adventure* to his desk, seeking to know.

This proves, I think, many things. Harriman did his letters every one the best he knew. Drudgery? Pot-boiling? Odd Jobbing in Literature? Ephemeral and so-many cents the letter? Well, he put the same effort into the letter as into his best of stories. He plodded along, never knowing what he was doing to himself, thinking only of those people out yonder who were putting into his hands part of all their future.

Even as life rewards the doers of the least things well (and who knows what is great?) Harriman lets go the accumulated inspirations and ideas, data of the years' gathering, and look what he got! Imagine what it means—"The Friendliest Letter Writer of California!" Takes something to top a grade of more than 100,000 letters. And they didn't know him. Here for years he has been plodding along, unadvertised, plugging, patient and sincere. And what he has given the hundreds of "Ask Adventure" inquirers proves to be the real thing; *Adventure* gives the best California has to offer. What do you think of that? Yours—Spears.

THE following was originally the first chapter of George E. Holt's complete novelette in this issue, but his suggestion that it be used instead at "Camp-Fire" seemed a good one, since it is occupied altogether with what might be called facts antecedent to the story itself. So here it is:

Ensenada, B. C., Mexico.

In beginning this story I should much like to set aside, for a little space, restrictions as to probabilities, and boldly set down what I feel to be the truth in the matter. But as this course would demand the reincarnation of two once-prominent men after they had died rather thoroughly some four or five thousand years ago, prudence counsels that my opinions be kept to myself. This, however, does not preclude me, I think, from setting forth certain facts, nor you from drawing your own conclusions therefrom.

NOW, certain of these facts are very, very old, and as the memory of them has been preserved through forty or fifty centuries by the minds and tongues of man, they must also be very, very true. And it is with these venerable and truthful matters that this twentieth-century story really begins.

In any volume of mythology—which, of course, is only a modern record of the oldest half-remembered events of importance in the world's youth—you will assuredly find some pages devoted to the exploits of a certain man, and, most probably, a wood-cut showing an astonishingly muscled gentleman leaning gracefully upon a war-club of imposing proportions. That will be Hercules, and the book will tell you that he "was son of Alcmena, wife of Amphytryon." His father, the book will also go on to tell you, regarless of the fair name of the inconstant Alcmena, was not Mr. Amphytryon, however, but Jupiter himself, king of all the gods. The city of Thebes was his birthplace, and between his birth and his death, in the flaming shirt of Nessus, Hercules no doubt packed more adventure than any other character known to man. Wherefore he became almost a god.

WITH most of these adventures we have no concern; but one or two of them have a bearing upon our story. Hercules reached manhood and became the father of three children. But one day Juno, spouse of Jupiter and consequently jealous of the illegitimate offspring of the King of the Gods, made Hercules insane, and in his fit of madness he threw his children into the fire and so destroyed them. Regaining his senses then, Hercules journeyed to Delphi to consult the famous oracle concerning atonement for his crime. The oracle ordained that he should go to a place called Tiryno, in the Peleponnesus, and there serve King Eurystheus for a space of twelve years, accomplishing therein twelve tasks which the king should impose upon him. Obeying the oracle, Hercules became the servant of King Eurystheus, and his twelve tasks became famous enough to rank, among students of the present day, with the Seven Wise Men, the Ten Commandments and the Fourteen Points. And two of them quite directly, through a course of four or five thousand years, made possible, or inevitable, certain other matters.

IN PERFORMING his tenth task—that of bringing from the Isle of Erythea the purple oxen of Geryon, Hercules, according to the record, "was come to the extremities of Europe and Africa, and here he set up two pillars, one on each side of the strait." We call one pillar Gibraltar (which the Moors named Djibel Tarik) and that other peak on the Moroccan coast, Djibel Musa, or Hill of Moses.

Back to this same region did Hercules' eleventh task take him. He was to fetch to Eurystheus "the apples of Hesperides, which grew in the country of the Hyperboreans. There they were guarded by an enormous serpent and by the Hesperides (Western Maids), who were the daughters of Atlas. There apples were of gold, and they had been given by Earth to Juno on her wedding day."

Now, the book will not tell you, what is also true, that this "country of the Hyperboreans" was Morocco, wherein the Mountains of Atlas uphold the heavens; nor that the native name of Morocco is Moghreb-al-Acksa, which means "Land of the West," and that thus the Hesperides, or "Western Maids," came by their name; nor that the "golden apples" still grow in profusion in the orange groves round about El Arache—sixty miles down the west Moroccan coast, where the "great serpent" or, as it is sometimes written, "foaming-mouthed dragon," still guards them (or did when I followed in the tracks of Hercules). This same serpent is the Kus River, which, after snaking its way through great stretches of flat country, visible from the hills like a gigantic silver-scaled Thing, froths viciously at the bar which the sea has thrown in its teeth.

HAVING reached the land wherein the golden apples grew, many obstacles rose in the road of our adventurer. He found—and this fact concerns us intimately—he found, according to the book, that the land was governed by a king named Antæus, son of Neptune and Earth. Being challenged by Antæus to a wrestling match, Hercules threw him several times, but each time Antæus rose with a vigor renewed through contact with his mother, Earth. Discovering this, Hercules held him in his arms and squeezed him to death.

But again the book omits facts of interest. The city in which King Antæus reigned is that we now know as Tangier, and Hercules so named it—Tanjerah, to be exact—after he became successor to Antæus. And, although the book is silent on this point also, Hercules left descendants among the people of Antæus; they live today, among those purple brown hills east of Tangier, in a territory which is called by them Anjerah—the "T" having been dropped—and they call themselves sons of Hercules. *Mohamed Ali*, who became known as "The Eagle of the Anjerahs," was and is the greatest of them. I, who lived among them for a while and by a quip of fate became one of their lesser chiefs, know them for a brave people, a bold people, an independent people, as becomes the descendants of such a one as Hercules.

Thus, I think, the line is drawn clear connecting the Master Adventurer of earth's childhood and *Mohamed Ali*, Anjerah chieftain—and, as you may know, politician, governor and outlaw.

IN THE same manner—but it is unnecessary!—could I show how through fifty centuries the line ran from King Eurystheus to a modern monarch, Abd-el-Aziz, Sultan of Morocco at the time of which I write. For Hercules secured the golden apples and carried them to Eurystheus, and they fell into the hands of one of the king's sons, who, seeking more of them, fell in love with one of the Western Maids, and thus left blood which came down through the centuries to the veins of the Moorish Sultan.

Here I must stop, lest I reach my prohibited conclusion. Still I think it a strange coincidence indeed that five thousand years ago Hercules performed twelve tasks for King Eurystheus, and that, in our own day, a lineal descendant of his should be called upon for another—the thirteenth?—task by a king descended from Eurystheus.

But such a thing happened—and the manner of it you shall see.—GEORGE E. HOLT.

SOMETHING from L. Paul concerning his story in the last issue. I'm glad *Corporal Hawkins* got his chance in fiction and here's hoping he got it in real life and fared equally well. There are many of him, if only we look about a bit.

The central figure of *Corporal Hawkins* is from life. I met him while taking the Guards Infantry course at Chelsea Barracks, London—a smartening up affair where they drilled us a hundred and eighty paces to the minute. He was a man with the heart of a pioneer, though, so far as I am aware, his life had been passed in England until the war. When we Colonials would tell our little yarns of our respective homelands he would listen wide-eyed and you could tell he was longing to be in Canada or Australia as the case might be, longing till it hurt.

SO I have taken such a man and mixed him up with an old trapper in Northern Canada, and I hope the story suits. I have tried as much as possible to keep away from the hair-raising events so often grafted on these stories. I feel that where two men are cooped up together for a winter there is enough humor—yes, and sometimes enough tragedy—found in minutiæ without going outside of fact into fiction. Of course the moose incident is not included in this category.

With regard to the stunt of putting cocoa into a cake after the careless constructor has dropped pipe ashes therein, it too is from life, some such base slander being chalked against me when four of us batched it in Ottawa one winter.

For the rest I have tried to stick to fact and true description. I hope I have succeeded.—L. PAUL.

AS A Christmas greeting the Northern Railway issued a very effectively illustrated little booklet entitled "The *Oriental* and Captain Palmer." Comrade Chet. G. Wood ran across it and was good enough to send me a copy. I liked it so well that I wrote at once for two copies, one to send to Bill Adams because I knew he'd like it, and one to be printed in "Camp-Fire." Our thanks are due the Great Northern for their courtesy.

Acknowledgement in the brochure is made to Mrs. Richard Fanning Loper, of Stonington, Conn., Captain Palmer's niece, and to Major-General A. W. Greely, Edwin S. Balch, William Brown Meloney, Arthur Hamilton Clark and John R. Spears as sources of the information in the booklet.

FOR centuries the rich trade goods of India—gold, ivory and rubies, spices, perfumes, ilks, light as gossamer, linen and finespun cotton cloths, the wools of Cashmere—have been sought by the eager markets of the world. Long caravans of camels plodded across the plains and deserts and through the mountain passes of Asia Minor to the peoples of the Mediterranean. And we see three mounted wise men carrying the rich tribute of the Orient to a manager in Bethlehem. As the cities of southern Europe grew, the trade with the East waxed larger and larger. It was carried on by ship and caravan through the Gulf of Persia, thence overland by Bagdad, Damascus and Constantinople.

While Christopher Columbus was a little boy in Genoa, something happened that led to revolutionary changes in the world, although at the time (1453) it seemed a great disaster. This was the closing by the Turks of these immemorial highways of commerce across Asia Minor. The mariners of Italy, Portugal, and Spain were called upon to find other routes to India. They followed around the east coast of Africa but their ships were very small, the sea was unexplored, and reputed to be filled with "horrid monsters" and strange lands where evil spirits lurked; so it was long before they touched the Cape of Good Hope (1487) and ten years later when they reached India by that route.

Columbus, having little idea of the earth's size, but knowing it was round, reasoned that by sailing directly west he would find a shorter and perhaps a more favorable course; he died without learning that he had discovered a continent which blocked the way. For the next three hundred years the dream of navigators was to find a passage north of America through the Arctic Sea to the Orient.

AS THE outlines of the continents took form on the marine maps of the world, it was seen that, to go from the Atlantic to the Pacific, ships must round Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope. The length of the journey and the growth of commerce in the new world as well as the old led to the building of larger and faster vessels. The *Santa Maria*, largest of Columbus's three ships, was of about 100 tons and some 65 feet long. From that time until the Revolutionary War the size and standard of ships was not much improved; following the war, the abundance of timber superior for shipbuilding, and the opportunities afforded by virtue of their new born independence combined to encourage the native genius of American shipbuilders. They bought out models with new lines, and fitted them with more and better sails.

OUR maritime prowess won for us the war of 1812 and that victory in turn gave further stimulus to advancing skill in naval architecture. From these influences came the clipper ships—so named because they "clipped it down the wind," fast, like a bird in flight. The first true clippers were the *Houqua* and the *Rainbow*, launched in New York Harbor in 1844 and 1845. Hundreds of American ships following their lines were built to meet the demand for their unrivaled service.

Improvements followed and in 1849, in New York, a clipper ship was built which embodied the perfection of her type. She was christened *Oriental* and was built to bear the precious trade of Asia, the oldest traffic known to commerce. Her first voyages were between New York and Hongkong, but in 1849 the East India trade with Great Britain was opened to the ships of other nations; and as this trade was the most desirable, it went to the finest and fleetest ships. So in December, 1850, the *Oriental* brought to London the first cargo ever carried there from China in an American ship. Perhaps she had in her hold many gifts for the approaching Christmas season. The *Oriental* already had made New York from Hongkong in 81 days and returned to Hongkong in like time. Now, she made London from Hongkong in 97 days, notwithstanding adverse weather. Her arrival was a sensation. Crowds thronged to the docks to see the long slender hull of this earliest of ocean grayhounds, her lofty masts that towered like spires above the dwarfed shipping of the yard, the wealth of furled white canvas that had carried her down the winds with such unheard of speed. To the editorial writers of the day she was a wonder, a menace, and a challenge. "We must run a race with our gigantic and unshackled rival. A fell necessity constrains us and we must not be beat." (London *Times*.) The London Illustrated News published a picture of the *Oriental* and an article part of which reads as follows: "Although many British ships have arrived at New York and Boston from China, since the alteration in the navigation laws, the first American ship (the *Oriental*) arrived in the West India docks on the 3rd instant, and has made the fastest voyage on record from China, by a sailing vessel. We should add that the *Oriental* brings about 1600 tons of tea at £6 per ton whilst all the ships loading at Whampoa (Canton's seaport) at the same time only got £3 10s. Correspondents availed themselves of the opportunity even at such a high rate of freight, the *Oriental* being known for her fast sailing qualities, which she fully verified." She was of average size, although the later tendency was to build larger vessels. Her length was 185 feet, breadth 36 feet, and depth 21 feet. William Brown Meloney in "The Heritage of Tyre" says, "She was the first out and out clipper London ever saw. The British admiralty copied her lines while she lay in dry dock. Afterward the lines of other Yankee flyers were taken off similarly, but the *Oriental* was the first inspiration of British builders."

SHE not only received formal acclaim from the generous and sportsmanlike English but was welcomed also by a group of Americans with the most precious of all greetings, that of genuine affection. Heading this group was her own designer, the celebrated Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, leader in the American shipping world.

Captain Palmer was born in Stonington, Connecticut, in 1799. It is needless to speculate upon the relative importance of inheritance and environment in molding his character for he enjoyed the greatest favor in both. His boyhood was spent playing about his father's shipyard and listening to tales of sailors whose very presence for repairs to battered hulls proved the adventure of the trips they made. Ship models were his only toys; the ambitions and dreams of seafaring men took the place of the usual fairy-tales. Withal, the atmosphere of home was one of culture, for his parents came from the best New England stock and his father was established in a shipyard of highest reputation. To distinguish him from his father, for whom he was named, he was called "Nat" in his boyhood, a name which clung to him throughout his career. While Nat was growing up, the young republic was developing and expanding on sea as well as on land. Young Nat could hardly wait to answer the call of the sea, which promised so much of adventure, fame, and fortune. He did not long resist it, for at fifteen years of age we find him on a blockade runner dodging the British navy in the fogs of Long Island and New England. At the close of the war he continued in the coastwise trade. The experience thus gained in all conditions of weather with no landmarks to guide him, and his proved seamanship, won him a place in 1819 as mate of a picked crew for a sealing expedition to the South Shetland Islands. His resourcefulness and sound judgment, together with downright hard work, were rewarded in 1820 by his being made captain of the *Hero*, a fifty-foot sloop used as a cruiser with a sealing fleet in the Antarctic.

WHILE thus engaged in 1821 the intrepidity of Captain Nat took him beyond the limits of charted waters, among gale-driven ice floes and treacherous shoals and led to his discovery of part of the Antarctic continent. The nonchalance with which unusual feats constantly were performed by crews of these small sailing ships characterized Captain Palmer's conduct, when, to the surprise of the famous Russian explorer, Bellingshausen, the *Hero* was encountered along these shores. Captain Nat extended the hospitality of the region to the Russian and offered to show him about. Commander Bellingshausen was most generous with the young American, although he declared himself abashed at having spent two years searching for the continent only to find that a boy in a sloop but little larger than the launch of the Russian frigate had not only beaten him to the place but was able to guide him safely among the islands. He thereupon gave to this shore the name "Palmer Land," which it bears to this day.

The power of Captain Palmer's presence is forcefully shown in a critical experience on the island of Juan Fernandez in 1830. As he went ashore for fresh provisions he was ambushed by some of the Chilean convicts who had overpowered the prison guard and taken possession of the island. They decided to seize his ship, the *Annawan*, and proposed first to kill him. As they were blind-folding him for execution he persuaded them to spare him so that he might convey them to the Chilean mainland. Once aboard ship with this cut-throat mob he asserted his dominance and held them at bay during ten days of extended calm which prevented an earlier landing.

Captain Nat was now 31 years old and in the full flower of manhood. His reputation for daring seamanship and diplomacy won him command of an Atlantic packet. He shortly demonstrated his outstanding qualities and until 1840 was Commodore of the Dramatic Line fleet plying between New York and Liverpool. Now, in the ripeness of his experience, he came into his own; as designer of these fine packets, he gained a high reputation. It was his practise to make the initial journey on each of the ships when it was launched and thus he put into service the *Garrick*, *Sheridan*, *Siddons* and *Roscius*. In October, 1840, he sailed the *Siddons* between Liverpool and New York in fifteen days, the shortest known westbound record for sailing vessels between those ports.

BUT merchant-sailing vessels had not been perfected. The need of larger and faster ships led to the development of the clippers which differed from former models in that they were longer in proportion to their breadth and carried greater spread of canvas. The opening of four Chinese ports in 1843 spurred the building. Captain Nat's answer to the call was the launching of the *Houqua* in 1844, earliest of all the clipper ships. The perfection of the clipper type was attained in the *Oriental;* then followed other notable examples of Captain Palmer's skill, the *N. B. Palmer*, *Samuel Russel*, *Golden State*, *David Brown* and *Contest*. As the combination of capacity with speed resulted in most efficient transportation and as the possibilities of speed seemed to have been well nigh exhausted, Captain Palmer dreamed of larger ships. His dream was realized in the rebuilding of the *Great Republic*, 335 feet long with capacity of six thousand tons, the largest sailing vessel ever built of wood. This ship, originally built by Donald McKay in 1853, burned in New York Harbor without making a voyage. She was purchased and rebuilt by Captain Palmer, but commerce was not ready for so large a ship and she was sold to the French Government for a transport in the Crimean War. This ended the most active period in Captain Palmer's life. Slowly but surely the steamship was replacing the sailing vessel.

Captain Palmer in his later years designed and sailed many of New York's most beautiful yachts. His interest in shipping was kept alive in his association with the New York Yacht Club of which he was one of the founders.

He died in 1877—one of America's great men of action. The list is long and its names are the mileposts of our progress. They are men whose imagination encompasses the present and foresees the future need and whose vigor of mind creates the means to fill that need.

James J. Hill was such a man. Nathaniel Brown Palmer devised the fastest ships to go around the continent and James J. Hill built the shortest route across it. But back of Captain Palmer's ships and Mr. Hill's locomotives was the unerring intuition that pointed to rapid and effectual transportation as the very keystone in the great modern arch of human advancement.

FROM Ralph R. Perry a few words concerning the actual facts back of his story in this issue. It always adds to our interest in a story, I think, to have a glimpse of the real materials from which it is made. I wish our writers gave it oftener but there's a fear among them that they may seem to talk too often at Camp-Fire. Yes, but how about the rest of us? Why not give us a chance to decide about that?

Hempstead, New York.

It was a real ship, the British steamer *Nigaristan*, that made the voyage related in "Five Pounds Per Ton Bonus." The American public *was* clamoring for dates, and this tremendous bonus was actually paid after the ship's arrival in the Bush Terminal about the 17th of last October. To earn it she had to steam from Basra at a knot and a half average over her standard speed, and there was another company moving heaven and earth to get the charter.

The events in the engineroom are of course fictitious, though I am indebted to a Mr. Symthe, third officer of the *Nigaristan*, for telling me what a disloyal engineer would actually do under the conditions outlined.—RALPH R. PERRY.

YOU may remember my having presented to Camp-Fire a modern bowyer and fletcher, because of the novelty and picturesqueness of such a trade in these ultra modern days which are the modernest we've had up to date. To avoid any seeming favoritism in thus giving free advertisement, I offered to do as much for any other bowyers and fletchers who might be among us. Two more have already applied and been mentioned and here comes a third—H. H. McChesney, 2414 Portland Avenue, Minneapolis, Minn.

But of the four Mr. Stemmler is the only one to blazen forth those arresting words "Bowyer and Fletcher." All of them, however, make bows and arrows and present pictures of bears, deer, etc. brought down by same.

IT'S just as well to note these names carefully. If the fanatics and their various calculating allies with irons of their own in the fire succeed in their present anti-weapon campaign, bows and arrows, canes and such will be the only means of self-defense left to us free-born and liberty loving Americans, with all the modern weapons in possession of other nations and of the crooks and thugs in our midst. Of course they'd soon legislate bows and arrows and canes and such away from us and probably, if they follow a logical course, our right and left hands as well, but we'd enjoy having all these things as long as we were permitted.

One reason I'm against the anti-weapon people is that they're not consistent or logical or thorough. Their fundamental principal is that the proper way to prevent crime is to legislate against the weapons or tools of crime. Well, that principle is either sound or not sound. If not sound, it's no good. If sound, it certainly merits full, logical development and application. Why legislate at firearms only? Why make petty laws against only one kind of weapon used for hold-ups and killings?

TO STOP there is slip-shod, amateurish, careless, illogical and reprehensible generally. Knives of all kinds, from butcher to pen, must go. All clubs of all kinds, including table and chair legs and all other detachable parts of furniture or anything else. All trees of course must be legislated out of existence—forbidden, destroyed. All stones and bricks should be collected from the surface of the United States, from all walls not in A-1 condition and from at least six feet below the surface of the ground and then placed in the custody of the police for safe keeping or to be reduced and destroyed by said police.

Murderous tools like axes, hatchets, picks, shovels, hoes, rakes, chisels, screw-drivers, scissors, table forks, large nails, etc., must of course be legislated beyond the use or possession of good citizens, though certain highly certificated workmen could be granted special police permits to use said tools on payment of generous fees and upon bonded agreement to deposit said tools each night in custody of said police, paying more fees for privilege of doing same.

The use of metal for any purpose whatever should be similarly safe-guarded by police supervision and control. Why legislate against weapons and leave free to all the material from which to make weapons?

BUT even all these legislative precautions can not be sufficient to carry to its logical development and full application the principle of preventing crime by legislating against the weapons and tools of crime. Of what avail to legislate against the weapons and tools, or even against the materials from which they can be easily made, if we fail to legislate against the hands that wield the tools? Where, pray, can you draw a logical line for stopping legislation short of including the hands as well as what they handle?

Nor will it be enough to cut off and deposit with the police, on payment of fee for same, the right hands of right-handed people and the left hands of left-handed people. Both hands must be removed and deposited where they can no longer endanger the public safety.

The foot having often proved a lethal weapon, all feet of all Americans must be removed not later than the twelfth birthday in the case of males, sixteenth in case of females.

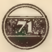
BUT even then the principle would not be fully developed or applied with the logical thoroughness that alone can attain really practical results. There remain the brains that inspire and move the hands that fashion the material into weapons and wield said weapons to the furtherance of crime and the endangerment of public safety and security. Unrestricted and unremoved by proper legislative action, the human brain remains a danger and a menace in our midst. So long as it so remains, our preliminary legislation against weapons, materials, hands and feet gets us really nowhere—merely compels a change in the ways and means of taking life and leaves still at large and unrestrained the very source and inspiration of all crimes of violence.

Nor is the brain left without its weapons. How easy, despite the lack of hands and feet, to roll into a footless victim standing on the edge of a precipice or house-top or at the edge of traffic and bump him to his death!

THERE must be no half-way measures. The human brain must be legislated into harmlessness. No American must be allowed to have a brain without having first obtained from the police a permit to possess same, on payment of a fee preferably large enough to discourage indiscriminate having of brains and to limit, in effect but unobtrusively, the privilege of having brains to only the richer part of our population. In addition to a permit to possess a brain, the present New York law might well be emulated and a second permit required, with payment of a second fee to the police, for the privilege of carrying said brain when entitled to possession of same, with a third permit, this time from the Fire Department, on payment of a third fee, permitting you not only to possess and carry but to shoot off said brain within the city limits.

NOR has public safety even yet been assured by legislation. Knowing the corruptness of our officialdom, we can not blink the fact that brain-permits might in some cases be issued to wrong parties provided the fee were duly paid. The real essence of the fundamental principle of preventing crime by legislation against the means of committing crime is removal of said means. Removal means removal. In this campaign for safety against the means of crime there can be no logical stopping-place short of removal of all brains. The only practical method where so great a population is involved is to remove the head at the neck. The only logical, final and safe conclusion of the anti-weapon campaign, therefore, is the guillotine for all Americans with brains of any kind. By it most Americans will be removed and the land of the free be left entirely in possession of the anti-weaponers. None of the beheaded, since they have brains, will object to being beheaded instead of being left to live in a country populated by anti-weaponers with the legislative complex. Everybody will be happy and safe, it's a fine plan logically developed from a noble and highly practical principle and I'm for it. What I object to in the anti-weapon campaign is that it stops short of this entirely logical conclusion and is therefore unscientific, careless, inefficient and half-baked. The principle it's founded on is fine.—A. S. H.

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow. Any qualified person can start a Station.



A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin board

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

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2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure.* Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
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6. Islands Part 3 Cuba
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CHARLES BROWN, JR., Boite No. 167, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

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21. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand

Captain F. J. Franklin, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

22. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East

R. G. Waring, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

23. Africa Part 5 Morocco

George E. Holt, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

24. Africa Part 6 Tripoli

Captain Beverley Giddings, care *Adventure*. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

25. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

26. ✠ Africa Part 8 Sudan

W. T. Moffat, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

27. Turkey

J. F. Edwards, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

28. Asia Minor

(Editor to be appointed.)

29. Bulgaria, Roumania

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

30. Albania

Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Jugo-Slavia and Greece

Lieut. William Jenna, Fort Clayton, Panama, C. Z. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

32. Scandinavia

Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

33. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland

Fred. F. Fleischer, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

34. ✠ Great Britain

Thomas Bowen Partington, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

35. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile

Edgar Young, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

36. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil

Paul Vanorden Shaw, 360 W. 122nd St., New York, N. Y. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

37. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

William R. Barbour, care *Adventure*. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

38. Central America

Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

39. Mexico Part 1 Northern

J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

40. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California

C. R. Mahaffey, Box 304, San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

41. Mexico Part 3 Southeastern

W. Russell Sheets, 1121 Columbia Rd., Washington, D. C. Federal Territory of Quinta Roo, Yucatan, Campeche. Travel, geography, business conditions, exploration, inhabitants, history and customs.

42. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin

S. E. Sangster ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

43. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario

Harry M. Moore, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

44. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario

A. D. L. Robinson, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing; farm locations, wild lands, national parks. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

45. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District

T. F. Phillips, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

46. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta

(Editor to be appointed.) Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

47. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin

Reece H. Hague, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

48. ✠ Canada Part 7 Southeastern Quebec

Jas. F. B. Belford, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

49. Canada Part 8 Newfoundland

C. T. James, Bonaventure Ave., St. Johns, Newfoundland. Hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography; general information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

50. Canada Part 9 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Fred L. Bowden, 312 High Street, Newark, N. J. Lumbering, hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography, farming and homesteading; general information.

51. Alaska

Theodore S. Solomons, 6720 Leland Way, Hollywood, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

52. Baffinland and Greenland

Victor Shaw, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

53. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.

E. E. Harriman, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

54. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico

H. F. Robinson, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields; hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

55. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.

Frank Middleton, 509 Frémont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

56. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains

Fred W. Egleston, 606 West Lamme, Bozeman, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

57. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country

R. T. Newman, 1001 Park St., Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

58. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.

J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

59. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.

Joseph Mills Hanson, care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

60. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

61. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

62. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River

Geo. A. Zerr, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See section* 64.)

63. Middle Western U. S. Part 5 Great Lakes

H. C. Gardner, 1909 Stout St., Denver, Colo. Seamanship, navigation, courses and distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties; river navigation.

64. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Adirondacks, New York; Lower Miss. (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms, North and East Shores of Lake Mich.

Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif. Transcontinental and other auto-trail tours (Lincoln, National, Old Santa Fé, Yellowstone, Red Ball, Old Spanish Trail, Dixie Highway, Ocean to Ocean, Pike's Peak); regional conditions, outfits, suggestions; skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake tripping and cruising; trapping; fresh water and button shelling; wildcraft, camping, nature study.

65. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers

Howard A. Shannon, care of *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

66. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville

Howard A. Shannon, care of *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

67. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians

William R. Barbour, care *Adventure*. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

68. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.

Hapsburg Liebe, care of *Adventure*. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

69. Eastern U. S. Part 6. Maine

Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. For all territory *west* of the Penobscot river. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

70. Eastern U. S. Part 7 Eastern Maine

H. B. Stanwood, East Sullivan, Me. For all territory *east* of the Penobscot River. Hunting, fishing, canoeing, mountaineering, guides; general information.

71. Eastern U. S. Part 8 Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., and Mass.

Howard R. Voight, 35 Dawson Ave., West Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions, history.

72, Eastern U. S. Part 9 New Jersey

Francis H. Bent, Jr , Farmingdale, N.J. Topography, hunting, fishing; automobile routes; history; general information.

73. Eastern U. S. Part 10 Maryland

Lawrence Edmund Allen, 201 Bowery Ave., Frostburg, Md. Mining, touring, summer resorts, historical places, general information.

A.—Radio

Donald McNicol, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

Victor Shaw, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. Gordon, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—**All Shotguns,** including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—**All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers,** including foreign and American makes. Donegan Wiggins, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—**Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800.** Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. Lewis Appleton Barker, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the Forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure.* Tropical forest- and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribsution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure. United States:* Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—Navy Matters

LIEUT. FRANCIS V GREENE, U. S. N. R., 588 Bergen Street, Brooklyn, N. Y Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered

K.-American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, 1244¼ Leighton Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

L.—First Aid on the Trail

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazards of the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

M.—Health-Building Outdoors

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

N.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. NEWMAN, 1001 Park St., Anaconda, Mont. General-office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

O.—Herpetology

DR. G. K. NOBLE, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St., and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.

P.—Entomology

DR. FRANK E. LUTZ, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write LAURENCE JORDAN, care *Adventure.*

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions,** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries,** the Dept., of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti,** the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska,** the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii,** Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba,** Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.,** Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **State Police of any State,** FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., Farmingdale, N. J.

For **Canal Zone,** the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men,** Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

Traveling in Jugo-Slavia

A POST-WAR Europe seems to be slowly growing quiet and peaceful again:

Request:—"Being interested in Jugo-Slavia, I desire some information about the country and especially of the portion known as Croatia and Slavonia. I am a Croatian by the accident of birth and a nurse by profession. As I am to receive a three month vacation in the spring, I am seriously thinking of paying a visit to the land of my fathers. Therefore the following queries:

1. Would the sum of $500 be sufficient for the entire expenses one may incur on the trip, the above sum including a third class passage there and back?

2. Are any difficulties encountered in the way of transportation such as train service between the smaller towns?

3. Must one report to the American consul immediately on arrival? If so where? Is there one in Agram?

4. Would you consider the country 'safe' at the present time for a young woman to travel alone? Am keeping in mind the possibility of some internal troubles arising as is often the case in the Balkans.

I have relatives scattered about Slavonia and would naturally stay with them thereby cutting down somewhat my expenses. Any other information will be appreciated."—LOUISE COYKICH, Youngstown, O.

Reply, by Lieut. Jenna:—1. I believe that $500 would be sufficient to cover your expenses from your present home to Agram and back and keep you quite comfortably while there.

2. You will encounter a certain amount of difficulty in going from one small town to another, but you will have practically none in going between large towns.

3. Upon your arrival in Agram (Zagreb) it would be advisable to report to the American Consul there and register. He would give you lots of good advice concerning your passport and could also give you lots of information concerning travel conditions and

I am sure that you would find him very willing to assist you in any way that he could.

4. As far as traveling is concerned, I believe that you would be perfectly safe going anywhere in Jugo-Slavia. You will find, I believe, no internal troubles of such an extent that they would make traveling at all precarious.

Now that I have specifically answered your questions, I shall add a few informal remarks concerning the trip. I believe that there are U. S. Shipping Board boats plying between the United States and Europe on which it is possible to travel at a much reduced rate. I believe that the 1st class rate between New York and England is something like $120. Don't you think it would be a good idea for you to write to the Chairman of the U. S. Shipping Board in New York and get some information relative to travel rates on their steamships?

Also have you decided what route you will take? If you go through France, landing at some French port, you have before you an expensive train trip to Agram. Have you thought of going to some Adriatic port? If you went to Trieste, you would have but a short trip to Agram and I believe you will find boats plying directly between New York and Trieste. You could probably save a fair amount of money that way. Once you get there, I believe that you will find that the living expenses are really very reasonable. Zagreb, which I believe is the after-war name for Agram, is quite a railroad center and you could go anywhere in the Jugo-Slav kingdom from there without any material difficulty.

By the way, I neglected to state definitely that there is an American consul in Zagreb. When I was over there, the consul was a Mr. Thompson. I considered him a very nice man and like him immensely.

When I left Jugo-Slavia in 1921 the country was very quiet and peaceful. There were no internal troubles at all and the country was getting on a more solid footing all the time. I think that you will find the conditions there now even better than in 1921. The only thing that I have noticed recently is a small argument between Jugo-Slavia and Bulgaria and I believe you will find that that will finally die a natural death. The Serbs don't want war. They want peace and they are, you will find, a very peaceful and calm people whom I admire greatly.

I don't know that there is so much more that I can tell you which would be of any great value to you as far as planning your trip is concerned. If there is anything else, however, which I can tell you, do not hesitate to ask. I shall be very glad to help in any way at all.

The full statement of the departments, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Death Valley

THE hottest place on the continent in summer, and cold as blazes in winter:

Request:—"Would you please tell me where I can obtain some information about "Death Valley?" What is the nearest railroad point to it, and has it been explored?"—Ivan J. Dill, Stockton, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Harriman:—I can give you pointers on Death Valley. It lies between the Amargosa and Panamint Mountains, along the eastern line of California. It is 276 feet below sea level and about seventy-five miles long.

It is the hottest place on this continent in summer, having a record of 134 degrees above zero. In winter the rawest cold winds imaginable blow through it. Many people have lost their lives in this valley.

In summer the air is so dry that a blanket soaked in water and hung on a line will be totally dry in half an hour. A man must drink as often as every half hour to keep alive. At Furnace Creek ranch the hens wade in the irrigating ditch and squat in the water. The corral containing cows, mules and horses has sheet iron nailed on its fence to protect the animals from hot winds. Only one man has been able to endure the heat more than three summers and he did it by sleeping in water at night.

Shoshone on the Tidewater & Tonopah Ry. is the nearest station.

Death Valley has been explored by hundreds of prospectors, who went there in cool weather in the fall or early spring.

One of my personal friends built an ore mill there and had to tie his shack to two heavy motor trucks to keep it from being wrecked by a high wind. He says it is —— at any season and only fools go there. He declares he ought to know, having gone there himself many times, which proves his contention. He declares he has never doubted his own folly since his first trip into the valley.

Two women went there in cool weather, driving a big automobile, and wrote a book about the trip. A young acquaintance of mine flew there in an airplane to photograph the valley for The National Geographic Magazine.

I know not less than five men right now, who have been there of late and they all damn the valley to the limit.

It is full of chemical salts.

Samoans

WELL set up, athletic and religious:

Question:—"I would like to ask you a few questions about the South Sea Islands. I am a United States Navy man serving on board the U. S. S. *Oklahoma*. I would like you to give me all the general information you can on the Samoan Islands, Marquesas Islands and all islands either owned or under the control of the United States. What chances are there for a white man to make money honestly in the islands?

How do the natives live and dress? How do the Americans live and dress?

I understand the men of these islands are very much physically fit. Is that so?

Are they fond of sports of all kinds? What is their favorite sport? Are they good boxers? Wrestlers?

What kind of dwellings do the natives live in?

Are there any minerals and oil in these islands?

What are the customs of the natives?

What different kinds of agriculture crops are raised in these islands?

Are there many American farmers?

I will appreciate very much any other information you can give me on these islands, especially those either owned or under control of the United

States."—Frank Powell, care of Postmaster, San Francisco, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—Hats off and hands across the sea to the gob! You have issued a large order, but thanks be it is not so large as you imagine it to be. For outside of Hawaii, the Samoas are the only islands in the South Sea that concern my answer to you, as America has some of the Samoan group, New Zealand having the mandate over the rest, which we took from the Germans. You can get far more and better information than I can give you regarding American Samoa by writing to the Superintendent of Public Documents, Washington., D. C., or to the Department of Commerce, same city—with a request for its publications on Samoa.

Now for your questions. A white man can make money in the islands just according to the way he goes about it and on the understanding that money, plus energy and industry, makes money. The Samoans dress much more simply than do the white folks, who dress in whites—silk, duck or linen.

The Samoans are the finest set-up men physically on this footstool, and they keep fit with the open air and life on the sea. Probably in your group of the islands the Samoans are baseballers. In our group they became so devoted to cricket that they knocked off work to play the game, matches between villages lasting weeks at a time, playing six out of the seven days—for the Samoans are deeply religious, Christian at that. So obsessed were they with cricket that ordinances had to be passed to limit the time of playing it. They do not box, but they wrestle some—catch as catch can.

The dwellings of the natives are thatch *wheres* or huts. Of the whites, lumber. There are neither minerals nor oil in Samoa. Wild pigs are abundant.

What do you mean by customs? They are of clean habits, mentally and physically, and idolatry has gone out. They have superstitions, of course even Americans in Nebraska have those—and they have native dances.

The principal crops for export are cocoa, copra—the dried kernel of the cocoanut—and a little rubber. If you follow this up by writing to the Commerce Department in Washington you will get right on to the ground floor in the way of island information.

Kia Ora (native for good luck!)!

Big Game in the Arctic

A GOOD hunting off the coast of Siberia:

Request:—"I am interested in Arctic life and hunting in the North and if you will answer the questions below, you can help me a lot.

I am most interested in seals and polar bears. So will limit my questions to these two species.

Are there any seals and polar bears in Northern Siberia? If so, where?

Are there any laws prohibiting the hunting of said animals?

What would you include in your pack for an expedition lasting four or five months?

Any other information would be appreciated."—Byron Ogle, DeSoto, Mo.

Reply, by Mr. Oliver:—There are hair seals all along the north coast of Siberia, skins can be purchased for about twenty-five cents in trade, they are rather hard to kill, all you have for a target is the seal's head above water. Polar bears are always found on the ice floes and are hard to kill, because they are so wary. The islands north of Siberia between Chaun Bay and The Kolyma are reputed to be so thick with polar bears that it is dangerous for a man to go there.

A four or five months trip into the Arctic would mean in the summer and you would need nothing outside of ordinary clothes because the sun shines twenty-four hours a day, so you will be plenty warm.

Why don't you take a trip from Nome along the north coast? You could also include walrus, they are lots of sport and their tusks would help pay expenses, it takes a big game rifle to kill them.

The only law I know against killing any of the above animals is that you must not kill walrus on the beach; it is one of the native superstitions, but is respected and enforced by the authorities.

The Opossum's Diet

A MARSUPIAL with a taste for young chicken:

Request:—"Right here is where I learn something—or, rather, unlearn something that I thought I had learned a good many years ago.

In the December 30th number of *Adventure* there is a copy of a letter from you to Mr. Jas. A. Hale, of El Paso, in which you refer to the opossum as "a meat-eating animal."

A good many years ago my brother and I were, as all kids are, prone to make a pet of every kind of animal we could lay hands on. Among these unfortunate victims was a young 'possum and that fellow, all the time we had him, would eat any kind of vegetable, cooked or raw, also any kind of fruit, but he wouldn't touch meat *either* cooked or raw.

My "Brittanica" refers to this particular species—as nearly as I can figure it—as *Didelphys marsupialis*, and says that they eat *insects*. Maybe they do; we never tried our 'possum on insects.

Now then, what was the matter with our victim? I have hunted a good deal in various parts of Texas and have seen a number of 'possums and they seem to be the same kind we had in our country as kids; that is, in eastern Kansas.

And here is an extra stamp or so to make up for those some other people fail to enclose."—H. R. Laudermilk.

Reply, by Mr. Whiteaker:—If you had had as many hen nests, young chickens and hens also destroyed by opossums as I have had you would not deny the fact that opossums eat flesh. Something must be left out of your "Brittanica" about the opossum. Look again or consult some book of Natural History. You'll find a great deal more about the opossum than you mentioned in your letter to me, The opossum was the first marsupial animal known.

These animals abound in the warmer parts of North America. Its form is robust, its head very large, its color dull white; its fur long, fine, and wooly, thickly interspersed with longer coarse white hairs, except on the head and some of the upper parts, where the hair is short and close. The tail is not quite so long as the body. It lives much in forests and among branches of trees, to which it usually retreats to devour its prey, twining its tail around a branch for security.

Many a time have we gone 'possum hunting in the late fall about the first frost. They are very fond of persimmons and you can usually find one or more in one of these trees after a frost. The frost ripens the persimmons and cause them to fall to the ground. With a good 'possum dog one can bag as many as three or four in a night. 'Possum and sweet potatoes make a fine dish for some but I am not particularly fond of it myself.

Its food consists of small quadrupeds and reptiles, birds' eggs, and insects; also fruits and the juicy parts of plants. It is easily tamed but its odor makes it an unpleasant pet. It often visits poultry yards, and is cunning in its quest of prey. It feigns death under very trying circumstances, often being kicked and beaten, or shook by a dog without a sign of life; the true state of the affair can be ascertained though by throwing it into water.

The female sometimes produce as many as sixteen at a birth; the young when born are blind, naked and shapeless, weighing about a grain each; they do not leave the pouch until they are about the size of a mouse. Indian women often weave the hair of the opossum into garters and girdles and sell them to tourists.

Thanks for the extra stamp. It will come in handy for quite a number of my correspondents forget to enclose postage. Glad that you wrote and come again sometime. Always glad to get letters from readers of *Adventure*. If there is anything else that you wish to know about the territory that I am covering for *Adventure* do not hesitate to write.

Automobiling in Colombia

IT CAN'T be done, but the scenery's grand:

Request:—"If I may presume, it seems to me that we are 'brothers under our skins.' Knew a fellow named John Parr, extra gang-foreman and all round track man, on the construction of the United Verde Extension road and Smelter in Arizona, who knew you on the S. P. construction in Mexico.

My Old Man had a contract on the same construction from Orendain to Tequila, that is, a portion from this side of Amatitan to the other side. I've been in Guatemala for some three years and heard of you there, but can't recollect just who it was.

I was with the International Railways of Central America until a few months after the death of Mr. A. Clark of Mexican National Railways fame. My father came out of Mexico with the revolution, was on the Northwestern of Mexico construction in 1910. Since 1914 he has been Superintendent of the 4-C Railway at Cananea, Sonora, Mexico, and for three years prior to the war I was Trainmaster there.

Both of us are T. T. T.'s. I guess I'm an irreconcilable. The boss is taking a long rest, and we have talked each other into making an extended tour of South America. He's a veteran automobile tourist and camper, having made yearly trips to California and the Northwest; and if it is at all practicable we'll take a machine—a Dodge Special, which is the burro of automotive transportation. So after having tried to get on your good side, in true Latin fashion, I'll attempt to get something out of you.

How about the following, if consistent:

Roads in Colombia and Chile? When does the winter set in down there and is it severe enough to hamper overland transportation? Somewhere I have gathered the impression that the summer in the U. S. is winter down there and that it gets pretty cold. Up in the highlands, I imagine there must be a lot of snow. You can set me right on this, if you please.

Is there a transcontinental road from Chile to the Argentine? Would there be much red tape in getting a transient automobile in and out of the countries? Between the U. S. and Mexico you simply drive across. Mexican or American license is sufficient.

The roads proposition is what worries me, and I certainly would appreciate it if you would help us decide whether the expense involved could be offset by the trips we would be able to make. Naturally, we want to cover all points of interest, and expecially mining camps, and it would be ridiculous to go to the expense of taking a machine and having to pay rent for storage somewhere and take to horses to get to our destination.

Thank you in advance for your courtesy in this connection."—JNO. V. BOYCE, Houston, Texas.

Reply, by Mr. Young:—Thanks for the compliment. I do seem to recognize the brotherhood existing between you and me. We have quaffed of the dreamer's wine, hit the pipe that makes romantic thoughts bubble in the brain, taken a shot in the arm from the same needle that makes us see the joke of existence. Land of the Lotus. Land of the burning sun. Land of lazy-eyed *señoritas*, cheap booze, easy jobs, non-energetic people to stalk big among. If it wasn't for the malaria, the pesky mosquitoes, the dysentery, the fleas and lice—but why spoil the picture?

Roads in Colombia you ask me? Non-existent. No can do with an auto. A hard trail is best. Man, the mud and grades are terrific when the trail is any wider than a path. And steep "all same" house roof. There is hardly enough level road in the whole republic to burn a gallon of gas on.

In Chili there are a couple of roads. Much dust—half a foot deep—on the southern one. The Transandean is very rough. One fellow, the Buick agent in Buenos Aires, made it across after much hardship. They had to blast down rocks, rebuild bridges, and sling the car down with ropes in places. I imagine it cost him considerable to make the trip but he was, of course, repaid in the consequent advertising.

Argentine has plenty of level going and that is about the only country a man can get around a bit with a car. Some of the other countries have them but only for use in the large cities. This is the case with Brazil.

It can be done from Texas to Mexico City. Possibly from there down to Cordoba. A thousand to one shot of being able to fetch Guatemala City and thence to Salvador. It can't be done any farther. Honduras has one good road but there is nothing connecting with it from the north. Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, all the others in fact from there south to Argentine are absolutely impossible with a car.

Winter down there in South America is on the other side of the year. They have some rather cold Augusts in southern Chili. The best way, and almost the only one, is to arrive by steamer, ride the native railroads and travel by mule or on foot, then take another steamer. You need have no fear of having them kick when you drive over the border in the auto. Man there is no actual record of any white man having walked across from Panama into Colombia. A few have made it on a hard trail from Colombia to Ecuador. Two T. T. T.'s made it on foot from Ecuador to Peru and what they saw almost set up a war—Peruvian Rubber Slavery Inquiry was started by them. There is a hundred thousand square miles of unknown country on the upper Brazilian border most of it covered with water for long periods during the year. No, sir, sorry, but it's hopeless.

Leper Island

A GOOD place to avoid:

Request:—"Where can I obtain information of the Government Leprosy Island?

Where does a person apply for a position as guard?

What is the term of enlistment, also the salary?

Are guards held until examined for leprosy after enlistment expires?

What are the requirements or regulations to fill the position?

I have a friend who was a water-tender in the Navy during the war, has an honorable discharge, and believes he wants the position. Would thank you for any information."—GEO. M. FISHER, Butte, Mont.

Reply, by Mr. Halton:—There are no guards employed at Molokai (Leper Island) and you are one of the many ex-service men who have been hoaxed regarding the good jobs to be had there. Sorry.

Lost Trails

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ATKINS, E. E. S. Jr.; Allen, Mabel; Ashby, George; Bayless, Dorothy; Banks, Jimmie; Bennett, Thomas T.; Brady, Patrick; Blum, M. A.; Buchanan, James; Breath, Hastlar Gal.; Bieker, Mrs. Berna; Crafts, H. A.; Chrisholm, Byron; Cardie, Sinn; Caney, Jack; Cuttriss, C. A.; Cortelli, Fatima; Crafts, L. S.; Currie, Mildred; Colwell, L. Margaret; Coxey, Willard; Christian, Happy; Dowson, Edward; Danziger, Adolphe; Denk, Ernest; Duncan, D. C.; Duplanti, Izora; Doran, E. F.; Edwards, Henry A.; Emerson, F. S.; Exner, Donald W.; Edgar, Paul; Frandsen, R. M.; Ferguson, C. C.; Gilgillan, Ruth; Gaylord, Alfred; Gene, Frenchie; Gray, Laban; Happy, H.; Hungerford, G. E.; Hilles, Lieut. Wm.; Huntington, C. H.; Hurst, Freda; Holston, S. C.; Horn, Charles; Hall, Kenneth, Earle; Irvin, T. W.; J. M. C.; King, J. D.; Kelly, D.; Kimsey, R. W.; King, Homer, B.; Kahele, Edward Augustine; Kleipe, George Ralph; Lynch, W.; Livingston, J. K.; LaGlaire, Peter; Loeck, A. J.; Loschik, S. T.; Lee, A. W.; Letton-Dow, Ann; Marille, Nelson; Matter, James H.; Miths, B. Radke; Moran, Edward J.; Mosse, James; MacIllrath, W. R.; Murphy, Elsbeth; Madison, Artell; McCravey, E. L.; Mennet, Geo.; Major, Max D.; Merritt, Florence; Morris, Troy; McGinsey, Fred; Moore, Earl; McCurdy, J. C.; Meade, Joseph H.; McBlair, Robert; Maus, Forrest L.; McDonald, Richard H.; Moore, E. V.; Noble, George; O'Farrel, Patrick; Ober, Bertha; Oangham, Rosebud Starr; O'Malion, Roy; Pierce, Samuel S.; Perry, James; Paterson, Robert G.; Paradis, A. B.; Patten, Lewis E.; Polowe, David; Presler, Phil; Pryal, Charles L.; Roe, Charles; Robinson, Jack P.; Robertson, Mrs. Chester; Rice, Alex.; Roland, Tom; Rhodes, Carrie L.; Ringer, Robert Derr; Rhodes, M. Benbow; Reid, Allan; Stillons, George; Schmidt, Alex. R.; Sprague, T. R.; Smalley, Jack G.; Singlev, Anton; Saidmore, John C.; Seabury, Ralph; Spaulding, E. D.; Strauch, Hugo; Trekell, Mrs. Cynthia; Todd, Homer Eps; Tell, William; Trannack, C. V. Warner, J. E.; Weston, Edward; Wittell, Chester; Wilman, Cynthia; Webber, E. C.; Wetzel, Lewis; Wolfe, John M.

BOWERS, SARAH. Left The Dalles, Oregon, when a child in 1880 to go to California with a family named Neats and Neats' father-in-law, Adams. Any information will be greatly appreciated by her brother—O. C. BOWERS, 423 West 6 Street, The Dalles, Oregon.

BOWDEN, LAURENCE WARREN. Age sixteen. Was last heard of at Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Was with a stacking man there. Believed to have headed toward British Columbia. His brother would like to hear from him. Address—ALPHEUS J. BOWDEN, Burke, Idaho.

ATKINSON, F. D. Last heard of in September, 1924, when he was employed by Childs Café, 238 Superior Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. Blue eyes, red wavy hair, straight nose, two deep lines across forehead, two deep lines between eyes, weight about 160 lbs., age 27 years. Any information will be appreciated by his wife.—Address MRS. F. D. ATKINSON, Gen. Del., Cincinnati, Ohio.

PATDO ALEJANDRO. Last heard of in San Francisco, Calif., about 1915. Said to have an American wife, two children at that time. Native of Bacolar, Pampango Prov., stout, color brown, good teeth. Left Manila Transport *Thomas*, 1904. Age 40 years. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address P. GASSMAN, Gen. Del. Manila, P. I.

INGLE, HORACE. Born March 11, 1891, in Knoxville, Tenn. Last heard of in Kansas City, Mo., in 1912. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address CHARLES W. INGLE, Livermore, Calif.

S. O. L. Will any members of the A. E. F. who were initiated into the S. O. L. during 1919, in the Paris Leave Area, be good enough to communicate with W. H. VAN ALLEN, 28 Brimer St., Boston, Mass.

ZWINGE, HENRY J. Please write to your sister for important news to your advantage.—Address MRS. F. T. GIBLIN, 24 Hobson St., Brighton, Mass.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

E. S. J. Formerly with Camp-Fire station No. 96. Please write to J. Cox, care of *Adventure.*

VESPER, PVT. OTTO. U. S. M. A., Ser. Dept., West Point, N. Y. Age 25 years, weight 170 lbs., 5 feet 11 inches tall, light blue eyes, light hair. Last heard of in the State of Washington. Any information will be appreciated.—Address U. O. CUMMING, The Old Colony Club, 8 E. 34th St., New York City.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

CLARKE, CORPORAL. Last seen U. S. Marine Barracks, Portsmouth, Virginia, in 1912. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. B. PINCHIN, Kati Kati, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand.

WHITE, DAN. U. S. Marine. Last seen Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in 1913. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. B. PINCHIN, Kati Kati, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand.

ANDERSON, HAROLD. Born in Halifax, N. S. Served in war with 57th Battalion, Australian Imperial Forces. Demobed France 1919, and proceeded to California. Any information will be appreciated.—Address H. O. C. LITTLECHILD, Port Moresby, Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

HAPPY DAVIS, JOHNNY LISSE, JACK "SHEIK" POLLOCK and HARRY BLACKMAN. Old Mobile pals let's hear from you.—Address AL. FARAGO, R. M. 1—C. U. S. N.—U. S. Naval Radio Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

THE following have been inquired for in either the June 10 or June 30, 1925 issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

BALDRIDGE, CAPT.; Bell, Harry; Beyersdorfer, Albert G.; Boston, Charles C.; Bowden, Laurence Warren; Bowers, Sarah; Brendle, John; Campbell, Robert; Carkeek, Charles; Carter, Henry B.; Daley, John F.; Daugherty, John; Duffield, Harry; Flack, Isaac M.; France, James; Gibbs, Everett; Haas, H.; LaChapelle, Ensebe; McCalmont, Margaret; McLoughlin, Peter; McTurnal, James; Moore, George W.; Grenak, Tom; Padgett, Jennings A.; Rance, Andrews; Renard, Claud and Irven; Rhodes, C. D.; Settle, Samuel; Stafford, J.; Tallman, George; Tarbell, Elliott; Thompson, W. T.; Tucker, Lorenzo; Walker, Red; Williams, Thomas R.; Wilson, Oliver; Worthington, Pvt. Albert Edward; C. F. E.; Ex-Marines of 7th Co.; Munroe; T. O.; W. C. N.; W. Charles.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JULY 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **complete novel** and the **complete novelette** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE BIRD OF FORTUNE — ***Rolf Bennett***
Few knew his value.

TOP HORSE FROM HOGJAW — ***Alan LeMay***
Horse-training rivals.

THE PARSON AND THE INDIAN — ***Albert William Stone***
Not many cowboys are humanitarians.

THE MUTINY — ***S. B. H. Hurst***
What! Bibles on board?

THE KILLER, THE KING AND THE WISE MAN — ***Nevil Henshaw***
Old Marcel sought to know the future.

THE BOLD DRAGOON
A Four-Part Story Part III — ***Leonard H. Nason***
The viscount was no soul of loyalty.

SOUTH OF SARAJEVO — ***Fred. F. Fleischer***
The Gipsy had an eye for horses.

STILL FARTHER AHEAD

The three issues following the next will contain *long* stories by Farnham Bishop, W. C. Tuttle, J. D. Sweeney, Gordon Young, Talbot Mundy, Gordon MacCreagh, Charles Victor Fischer, John Webb, W. Townend and H. Bedford-Jones; and short stories by Bill Adams, Wm. Byron Mowery, E. S. Pladwell, F. St. Mars, Bruce Johns, Raymond S. Spears, Walter J. Coburn, Fairfax Downey, Leslie MacFarlane, Percy Charles Chandler, Stanton C. Lapham and others; stories of cowboys on the Western range, filibusters in Nicaragua, sled dogs in the snow country, skippers on the high seas, gold hunters in California, ancient Romans in Britain, explorers up the Amazon, gobs with the Pacific, cavalrymen with the A. E. F., Malay guides in Borneo, bullfighters in Gibraltar, filibusters in Central America, adventurers the world around.

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